



Home Office

# **Country Policy and Information Note**

## **China: Muslims (including Uyghurs in Xinjiang)**

**Version 3.0**

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# Executive summary

The constitution prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion and guarantees freedom of religion for 'normal religious activities', a term which is undefined. The government recognises 5 official religions, including Islam. These groups must register with the government's Patriotic Religious Associations, which regulates and monitors their activities.

Estimates suggest that the Muslim population ranges between 18 million and 25 million. The 2 largest Muslim ethnic groups are the Hui, often referred to as Chinese Muslims, who primarily reside in the northwestern regions, and the Uyghurs, who are predominantly based in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. In addition to these groups, smaller Muslim communities such as the Uzbeks, Kazakhs, and Tajiks are also present, mainly concentrated in Xinjiang but scattered across other regions as well.

Muslims in Xinjiang are likely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm from the state.

Uyghur Muslims outside of Xinjiang are likely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm from the state

Non-Uyghur Muslims outside of Xinjiang are unlikely face a real risk of persecution or serious harm from the state. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise. Risk of persecution may increase where a person attends an unregistered (illegal) Islamic religious group.

Protection is unlikely to be available and internal relocation is unlikely to be reasonable. 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.

All cases must be considered on their individual facts, with the onus on the person to demonstrate they face persecution or serious harm.

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# Assessment

Section updated: 21 July 2025

## About the assessment

This section considers the evidence relevant to this note – that is the [country information](#), refugee/human rights laws and policies, and applicable caselaw – and provides an assessment of **whether, in general**:

- a person faces a real risk of persecution/serious harm by the state because the person is or is believed to be a Muslim
- the state (or quasi state bodies) can provide effective protection
- internal relocation is possible to avoid persecution/serious harm
- a claim, if refused, is likely or not to be certified as ‘clearly unfounded’ under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

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

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## 1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals

### 1.1 Credibility

- 1.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 1.1.2 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](#)).
- 1.1.3 Decision makers must also consider making an international biometric data-sharing check, when such a check has not already been undertaken (see [Biometric data-sharing process \(Migration 5 biometric data-sharing process\)](#)).
- 1.1.4 In cases where there are doubts surrounding a person’s claimed place of origin, decision makers should also consider language analysis testing, where available (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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## 1.2 Exclusion

- 1.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons to apply one (or more) of the exclusion clauses. Each case must be considered on its individual facts.
- 1.2.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).
- 1.2.3 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).

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## 2. Convention reason(s)

- 2.1.1 Religion, race and/or perceived political opinion.
- 2.1.2 Establishing a convention reason is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question is whether the person has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of an actual or imputed Refugee Convention reason
- 2.1.3 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds, see the Asylum Instruction, [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 3. Risk

### 3.1 General - religious groups including Islam

- 3.1.1 The Chinese constitution prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion and guarantees freedom of religion for ‘normal religious activities’, a term which is undefined (see [Constitution](#)).
- 3.1.2 The government recognises 5 religions, including Islam. Members of recognised religions must register with the government’s Patriotic Religious Associations, which regulates and monitors their activities. Only registered religious groups are legally allowed to practise their faith (see [Religion in China](#) and [Legal framework](#)).
- 3.1.3 Unregistered religious groups are illegal and risk having their activities restricted and their places of worship closed. A person’s ability to practice their faith depends on several factors:
  - whether they worship within registered or unregistered institutions
  - whether their religious activities are public or private, and
  - whether their religious expression, or the religion itself, is perceived by

the state as being linked to ethnic, political, or national security concerns (see [Religion in China](#) and [Legal framework](#)).

- 3.1.4 Islamic groups must register with the Islamic Association of China (IAC). Registered religious groups must adhere to the Regulations on Religious Affairs (RRA) which require them to 'integrate religious doctrines into Chinese culture' and to adapt to 'Chinese Cultural Traditions', a process which is often referred to as 'sinicisation'. New regulations went into effect in early 2020 that require religious groups to accept and spread Chinese Communist Party (CCP) ideology and values (see [Legal framework](#)).
- 3.1.5 Muslims are estimated to number between 18 million and 25 million, a small minority in China's population of over 1.4 billion. Exact numbers are difficult to ascertain due to a lack of accurate data and a fear of self-identifying as a group that could be singled out. There are 2 main ethnic Muslim groups, the Hui (also sometimes referred to as Chinese Muslims), who live mostly in the northwest regions (not including Xinjiang); and the Uyghurs, largely based in the northwestern region of Xinjiang. Other small Muslims groups include Uzbeks, Kazakhs and Tajiks who are scattered throughout various regions but are mainly found in the Xinjiang (see [Religion in China](#)).
- 3.1.6 For country information on, and assessment of risk to, Christians and other non-Christian religious groups see the country policy and information notes on [China: Christians](#) and [China: non-Christian religious groups](#).

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## 3.2 Muslims in Xinjiang

- 3.2.1 Muslims in Xinjiang are likely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm from the state. Each case must be considered on its individual facts.
- 3.2.2 There are an estimated 12 million Uyghurs in China, the vast majority are Sunni Muslims living in Xinjiang. Uyghurs are a Turkic-speaking ethnic group indigenous to Central Asia with strong cultural, linguistic, and religious ties with other Turkic peoples such as the Turks, Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Turkmen, Kyrgyz, and Azeris, setting them apart from the Han Chinese in both heritage and identity (see [Religion in China](#)).
- 3.2.3 In May 2014, the government initiated the 'Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Terrorism' in the Xinjiang region aimed at those perceived by the state as threats to national security, ethnic unity, or social stability. While it primarily targets Uyghur Muslims, other Muslim communities in the region may also be affected (see State treatment of Muslims in Xinjiang province-[Regulations](#)).
- 3.2.4 Xinjiang has its own laws and regulations on counterterrorism and "de-extremification" in addition to national counterterrorism laws, which classifies a wide range of behaviours as 'extremist', including cultural and linguistic expressions of Muslim identity. As a result, Uyghurs and other Muslim-majority ethnic groups face severe restrictions on religious practices, cultural traditions, and everyday customs including, using Islamic greetings and attending religious schools. All religious activities must align with 'core socialist values' and follow the 'direction of Sinicization'. These laws have made it extremely difficult for Muslims in Xinjiang to freely practise their religion or preserve their cultural identity (see State treatment of Muslims in

Xinjiang province - [Regulations](#) and State treatment of Muslims in the Xinjiang province - [Restrictions on Muslims and Islamic culture](#)).

- 3.2.5 Uyghur and other Muslim groups are subject to intense state surveillance with hundreds of CCTV cameras per 1,000 people deployed in cities like Urumqi, the provincial capital, many using facial recognition to identify Uyghurs. Uyghurs have been forced to install the Jingwang app, which monitors phone data and reports it to authorities. Surveillance extends into homes through the 'United as One Family' campaign in which Han Chinese officials assess Uyghur families' loyalty and religious practices. As of late 2023, Xinjiang had more police per capita than anywhere else in China, though visible checkpoints have decreased in favour of more discreet, tech-driven monitoring. Meanwhile, state-run boarding schools continue to separate Uyghur children from their families and promote Mandarin over Uyghur, raising concerns of forced assimilation (see State treatment of Muslims in Xinjiang province - [Surveillance](#)).
- 3.2.6 Satellite imagery and witness reports indicate that around 16,000 mosques, approximately 65% of the total in Xinjiang, have been destroyed or damaged by the government, with about 8,500 demolished entirely and much of the land left vacant. Additionally, 30% of key Islamic sacred sites, including shrines and cemeteries, have been demolished, and 28% of altered mosques have been repurposed (see State treatment of Muslims in Xinjiang province - [Mosques and Islamic spaces](#)).
- 3.2.7 The government has implemented coercive population control measures in Xinjiang since 2017. These policies are part of a broader campaign to reduce birth rates in southern Xinjiang through intrusive and punitive enforcement of family planning rules. As a result, the region's birth rates dropped 49% between 2017 and 2019. Control measures include forced intrauterine device (IUD) insertions, sterilizations, and abortions, often under threat of internment or imprisonment for having too many children. Given the lack of government data, particularly after 2019, and the restrictive reporting environment within Xinjiang, it is difficult to ascertain the current scale and extent of such treatment. In 2022 the UN Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OCHCR) found reports of violations of reproductive rights to be credible. The current available information does not indicate any change in stance by the state in its approach to the reproductive rights of Uyghurs and enforcement of family planning policies (see State treatment of Muslims in Xinjiang province- [Birth control and forced sterilisation](#)).
- 3.2.8 Since 2017, the Chinese government has detained hundreds of thousands of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang without formal charges, often for minor offences related to religious or cultural expressions. Detainees have reported severe mistreatment, including forced political indoctrination, solitary confinement, torture, and sexual abuse. Uyghurs make up a disproportionately high share of the country's prison population, with incarceration rates in some areas Xinjiang reaching levels far above the national average. The prison population does not account for those held on remand, in pre-trial, not formally charged or those placed in re-education camps, the number of which is unknown. Alongside mass detentions, the government has implemented large-scale forced labour programmes, relocating or coercing millions into state-controlled jobs, particularly in agriculture and manufacturing. These measures are often framed as poverty



alleviation or vocational training (see State treatment of Muslims in Xinjiang province- [Detention and 're-education centres'](#) and State treatment of Muslims in Xinjiang province- [Forced labour](#))

- 3.2.9 Uyghurs face significant restrictions on movement, with many denied passports or subjected to intense scrutiny and surveillance when attempting to travel, even within China. Uyghurs who are permitted to travel abroad must comply with strict conditions, including avoiding political activity and providing detailed personal information. Upon return, they are often questioned and have their passports confiscated and some are imprisoned. (see [Freedom of movement](#)).
- 3.2.10 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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### 3.3 Uyghurs outside of Xinjiang and non-Uyghur Muslims

- 3.3.1 Uyghur Muslims outside of Xinjiang are likely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm from the state. Each case must be considered on its individual facts.
- 3.3.2 Non-Uyghur Muslims - including the Hui and some other minorities - outside of Xinjiang who belong to registered Islamic groups are unlikely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm from the state. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.
- 3.3.3 Risk of persecution is likely to increase where a person belongs to and attends an unregistered (illegal) Islamic religious group or where the group is perceived to threaten national security. If the religious group follows the state-sanctioned version of their religion, then religious practice is likely to 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.
- 3.3.4 The Hui Muslim ethnic group has a population of around 10 million. They are generally well-assimilated into the dominant Han culture, speaking Mandarin and blending in with the Han majority. The Hui are primarily concentrated in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region (NAR), as well as the provinces of Gansu, Qinghai, and Yunnan (see [Religion in China](#)).
- 3.3.5 Hui Muslim communities are generally able to practise their faith. However, recent policies have made this more difficult. This shift appears driven by the government's conflation of Islamic identity with extremism and its broader campaign to 'sinicise' religion (see State treatment of Muslims outside of Xinjiang- [Regulations](#)).
- 3.3.6 In provinces and regions with significant Hui populations, such as Ningxia, Henan, and Beijing, officials have closed mosques, removed Islamic architectural elements, shut down religious schools, and restricted practices like Islamic preaching, Arabic script, halal food, and religious attire. Surveillance cameras have been installed in mosques and Hui individuals are encouraged to report on the religious activities of others. Imams are required to demonstrate loyalty to the state, attend monthly ideological training, and pass annual tests to retain their licences, with unlicensed mosques being shut down. Hui Muslims are generally able to attend prayers

and wear religious clothing, however these rights vary by region (see State treatment of Muslims outside of Xinjiang- [Restrictions on Muslims and Islamic culture](#)).

- 3.3.7 In regions such as Ningxia, Gansu, Qinghai, Henan, and Yunnan, numerous mosques have been closed or demolished under “consolidation” policies, which aim to limit the number of mosques within a given area. In some cases, entire communities were pressured to consent to these changes, with threats of job loss for public employees who resisted. Surveillance measures have also been introduced in renovated mosques (see State treatment of Muslims outside of Xinjiang - [Mosques and Islamic spaces](#)).
- 3.3.8 Sources have limited information on domestic ‘labour transfer’ programs and no data on the profile and number of those affected. Chinese authorities reportedly implement programmes as part of poverty alleviation efforts in regions such as Ningxia, Gansu, Qinghai, and Yunnan. These programmes involve relocating large numbers of residents to other provinces for work, with hundreds of thousands transferred annually. While framed as economic development transfers appear to disproportionately target Hui populations, with officials explicitly recruiting Hui workers to promote ‘social stability’ and ‘national unity’ (see State treatment of Muslims outside of Xinjiang- [Labour transfers](#)).
- 3.3.9 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## **4. Protection**

- 4.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they are unlikely to be able to obtain protection.
- 4.1.2 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## **5. Internal relocation**

- 5.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they are unlikely to be able to internally relocate to escape that risk.
- 5.1.2 For further guidance on internal relocation and factors to consider, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## **6. Certification**

- 6.1.1 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.
- 6.1.2 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

## About the country information

This section contains publicly available or disclosable country of origin information (COI) which has been gathered, collated and analysed in line with the [research methodology](#). It provides the evidence base for the assessment which, as stated in the [About the assessment](#), is the guide to the current objective conditions.

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

This document is intended to be comprehensive but not exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned this does not mean that the event did or did not take place or that the person or organisation does or does not exist.

Sources often refer to Muslim groups collectively and do not distinguish between the different ethnic groups which practice Islam so there may be some cross over into different sections. Where the country information relates to a specific group this has been identified.

The COI included was published or made publicly available on or before **21 July 2025**. Any event taking place or report published after this date will not be included.

Decision makers must use relevant COI as the evidential basis for decisions.

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## 7. Religion in China

### 7.1 Religious demography

7.1.1 The US State Department 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom-China: Xinjiang (the 2023 USSD IRF report), published in June 2024, noted: 'The government recognizes five official religions: Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism. Regulations require religious organizations to register with the government. Only religious groups belonging to one of the five state-sanctioned religious associations are permitted to register, and only registered groups may legally hold worship services.'<sup>1</sup>

7.1.2 The Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Country Information Report, based on their 'knowledge and discussions with a range of sources in Australia and overseas, and taking into account open-source reports', published in December 2024, (2024 DFAT Report) noted that:

'The Government of China officially recognises five religions: Buddhism, Catholicism, Daoism (Taoism), Islam and Protestantism. Confucianism, a philosophy sometimes viewed as a religion in the West, has long shaped Chinese culture. The US Government estimated in 2021 that 52.2 per cent of China's population were not affiliated with any religion, 21.9 per cent practiced traditional folk religion, 18.2 per cent were Buddhist, 5.1 per cent were Christian and 1.8 per cent were Muslim. However, local academics told DFAT in 2023 that wide discrepancies existed in the number of reported religious believers and religiosity in China in general, due to a lack of reliable and accurate data, as well as fear of self-identifying as part of a group that

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<sup>1</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom- China: Xinjiang](#), 26 June 2024

could be singled out.<sup>2</sup>

- 7.1.3 The [Online Spiritual Atlas of the Global East \(OSAGE\)](#), created by the Center on Religion and the Global East (CRGE) at Purdue University<sup>3</sup>, shows the distribution of religious sites across China<sup>4</sup>.

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## 7.2 Muslims

- 7.2.1 **NOTE: The maps in this section are not intended to reflect the UK Government's views of any boundaries.**

- 7.2.2 Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan fact tank that conducts ‘... public opinion polling, demographic research, content analysis and other data-driven social science research’<sup>5</sup>, published a report ‘Measuring Religion in China’ published in August 2023. The Pew Research report provided the table below showing the population and the proportion of the total population of ethnic groups that practice Islam using data from the 2020 Census of China<sup>6</sup>.

### **Roughly 9 in 10 Chinese Muslims are either Hui or Uyghur**

*Government-designated ethnic groups that traditionally practice Islam*

	<b>Number of adults</b>	<b>% of all Muslim ethnic groups</b>	<b>% of all Chinese adults</b>
Hui	8,291,749	46%	0.75%
Uyghur	7,717,361	43	0.69
Kazakh	1,094,518	6	0.10
Dongxiang	466,976	3	0.04
Kirgiz	140,601	1	0.01
Salar	101,781	1	0.01
Tajik	35,771	<0.5	<0.01
Baoan	14,703	<0.5	<0.01
Uzbek	8,766	<0.5	<0.01
Tatar	2,646	<0.5	<0.01
All Muslim ethnic groups	17,874,872	100	1.61

Note: “All Muslim ethnic groups” account for 1.61% of China’s adult population. In surveys, a small share of people in these ethnic groups do not identify as Muslim and a small share of Han Chinese do identify as Muslim.

Source: Census of China, 2020.  
“Measuring Religion in China”

<sup>2</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report China](#) (paragraph 3.49), 27 December 2024

<sup>3</sup> OSAGE, [Online Spiritual Atlas of the Global East](#), no date

<sup>4</sup> OSAGE, [OSAGE-China Map](#), no date

<sup>5</sup> Pew Research Center, [About Pew Research Center](#), no date

<sup>6</sup> Pew Research Center, [Islam in China](#), 30 August 2023

### 7.2.3 The Pew Research report also noted:

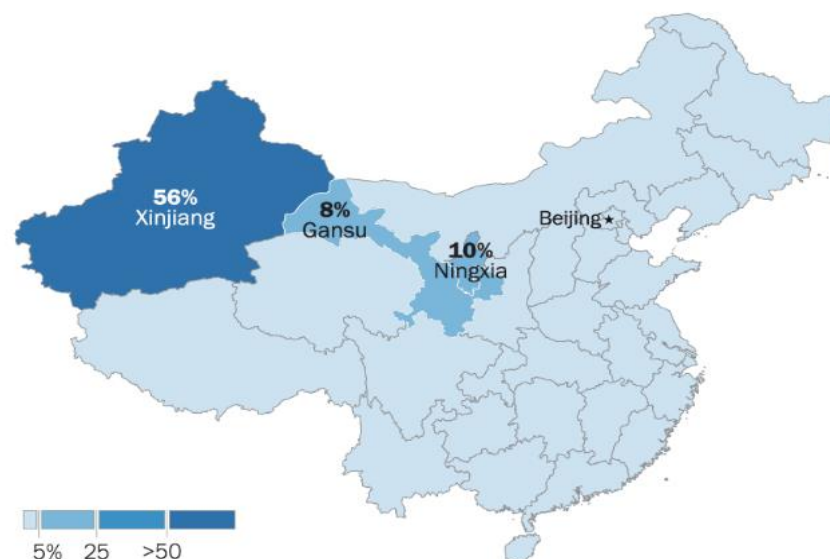
‘Culturally, Hui people, who began a period of rapid assimilation into the mainstream Han Chinese culture during 14th century, have a good deal in common with the Han majority, including the Han Chinese language and surnames. By contrast, Uyghurs – who until the last century had limited interactions with the Han Chinese – mainly speak Uyghur, a Turkic language. They also differ in appearance and culture from the Han majority.

‘... Nearly all of China’s Uyghurs (99%) live in one province, Xinjiang. Hui people are more widely dispersed, with an estimated 10% in Xinjiang and 42% in the other northwestern provinces of Gansu, Ningxia and Qinghai. The remaining half are scattered across the country, with a significant concentration in Henan (8%) and Yunnan (6%).’<sup>7</sup>

### 7.2.4 The map below was taken from the Pew Research Center’s report<sup>8</sup>. It shows the distribution of Chinese Muslim-majority ethnic groups by province.

#### **China’s predominantly Muslim groups are heavily concentrated in the northwest**

*Distribution of Chinese Muslim-majority ethnic groups, by province*



Source: Census of China, 2020. Data is only available for mainland China.  
“Measuring Religion in China”

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### 7.2.5 The 2024 DFAT report stated:

‘Approximately 1.8 per cent of China’s population (approximately 25 million people) are Muslims. Muslims live throughout China, however, predominantly reside in the west of the country in the [Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region] XUAR (the only Muslim majority province), Ningxia Autonomous Region (NAR), Gansu, IMAR (mainly Dongxiang Muslims) and Yunnan. Muslims in China are almost entirely Sunni.

‘China has 10 major Muslim ethnic groups, the largest of which are the Uyghurs (approximately 12 million) and the Hui (approximately 10 million

<sup>7</sup> Pew Research Center, [Islam in China](#), 30 August 2023

<sup>8</sup> Pew Research Center, [Islam in China](#), 30 August 2023

people) ...The Hui are relatively assimilated into the dominant Han Chinese culture, speak Mandarin and can more easily pass as Han Chinese in day-to-day life due to their physical appearance. They are predominantly based in NAR, Gansu, Qinghai, and Yunnan provinces.’<sup>9</sup>

- 7.2.6 Deutsche Welle, a German international broadcaster<sup>10</sup>, noted in 2024 that: ‘The Hui are currently one of the 56 officially recognized ethnic nationalities or groups in China, but they do not differ significantly from the majority Han Chinese. Their identity factor, their faith, hasn’t led to exclusion. The Hui mostly have friendly relations with Han Chinese, wrote Frauke Drewes, who researched Islam in China at the German University of Münster until 2015. “It can be assumed that the Hui are very close to the Han majority, closer than their co-religionists of other nationalities.”’<sup>11</sup>

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## 7.3 Xinjiang

- 7.3.1 The 2024 DFAT report stated: ‘Uyghurs are a Turkic-speaking, predominantly Sunni Muslim people native to Central Asia. Uyghurs are ethnically, culturally and religiously distinct from Han Chinese and share close ties with Turks, Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Turkmen, Kyrgyz and Azeris. There are an estimated 12 million Uyghurs in China, the majority of whom reside in Xinjiang, but also live as a minority in Gansu, Qinghai, Tibet and Hunan.’<sup>12</sup>
- 7.3.2 The 2023 USSD IRF report), published in June 2024 noted: ‘A report on the XUAR issued during the year by the PRC Department of Population and Employment Statistics of the National Bureau of Statistics estimates the total population at 26 million. The 2020 census states Uyghurs, along with Kazakhs, Hui, Kyrgyz, Tajiks, and members of other predominantly Muslim ethnic minority groups constitute approximately 15 million individuals, or 58 percent of the total population. According to the report, 12 million of these are Uyghurs. The largest segment of the remaining population is Han Chinese (11 million, or approximately 42 percent of the population), with additional groups including Mongols, Tibetans, and others constituting less than 1 percent. Uyghurs are overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim.’<sup>13</sup>

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## 8. Legal framework

### 8.1 International conventions

- 8.1.1 The government has signed, but not ratified, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights<sup>14</sup>, which provides all individuals the right to “adopt a religion or belief” of their choice<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report China](#) (paragraphs 3.87-3.88), 27 December 2024

<sup>10</sup> DW, [About DW's history and mission](#), no date

<sup>11</sup> DW, [Decoding China: How Beijing is Sinicizing Islam](#), 28 June 2024

<sup>12</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report China](#) (paragraph 3.27), 27 December 2024

<sup>13</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom- China: Xinjiang](#), 26 June 2024

<sup>14</sup> OCHCR, [Ratification Status for China](#) (5 October 1998)

<sup>15</sup> OCHCR, [International standards on freedom of religion or belief](#), 2020



## 8.2 Constitution

### 8.2.1 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.’<sup>16</sup>

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## 8.3 Regulation on Religious Affairs (RRA)

### 8.3.1 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 2017<sup>17</sup>.

### 8.3.2 On 1 February 2020 the [2019 Administrative Measures for Religious Groups](#) came into effect<sup>18</sup>.

### 8.3.3 The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), a ‘nonpartisan, independent national membership organization, think tank, educator, and publisher’<sup>19</sup>, noted in their backgrounder on Religion in China that:

‘The State Council, the government’s administrative authority, passed regulations on religious affairs in 2018 to allow state-registered religious organizations to possess property, publish literature, train and approve clergy, and collect donations. But the revised rules also included restrictions on religious schooling and the times and locations of religious celebrations, as well as monitoring of online religious activity and reporting donations that exceed 100,000 yuan (around \$15,900 [£10,394<sup>20</sup>].

‘Under Xi, the [Chinese Communist Party] CCP has pushed to sinicize religion, or shape all religions to conform to the doctrines of the Communist Party and the customs of the majority Han Chinese population. New regulations that went into effect in early 2020 require religious groups to accept and spread CCP ideology and values. Faith organizations must now get approval from the government’s religious affairs office before conducting any activities. The next year, the CCP banned unregistered domestic religious groups from sharing religious content online and prohibited overseas organizations from operating online religious services in China without a permit, particularly targeting Christianity-related content on the messaging service WeChat.

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<sup>16</sup> [Constitution of the People's Republic of China](#), 20 November 2019

<sup>17</sup> LoC, ‘[China: Revised Regulations on Religious Affairs](#)’, 9 November 2017

<sup>18</sup> Bitter Winter, ‘[English Translation of the 2019 Administrative Measures for...](#)’, 15 January 2020

<sup>19</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, [About CFR](#), no date

<sup>20</sup> Xe.com, [100,000 CNY to GBP](#), 23 June 2025

‘In September 2023, stricter laws required religious sites and activities to support sinicization policies, which included prohibiting religious activity if it could “endanger national security, disrupt social order [or] damage national interests.”’<sup>21</sup>

8.3.4 The 2023 USSD IRF report stated:

‘The Regulations on Religious Affairs require that religious activity “must not harm national security.” While the regulations stipulate religious groups must abide by the law, safeguard national unity, and respond to “religious extremism,” the term “extremism” is undefined. Measures to safeguard unity and respond to “religious extremism” include monitoring groups, individuals, and institutions, and recommending penalties such as suspending groups and canceling clergy credentials.’<sup>22</sup>

8.3.5 The 2024 DFAT report stated:

‘The Revised Regulations on Religious Affairs (2018) were introduced to ensure national unity and protect against “dangerous behaviours”. The Revised Regulations on Religious Affairs (2018) specified that citizens were still entitled to the right of freedom of religious belief, however Article 3 was amended to state that the management of religious affairs should adhere to the principles of protecting legitimate religious activities, curbing, and preventing illegal and extreme practices, resisting infiltration and fighting crime. Another new article, Article 4, prohibited individuals and organisations from creating contradictions and conflict between different religions, within a single religion, or between religious and non-religious citizens; from advocating, supporting, or funding religious extremism; and from using religion to undermine ethnic unity, divide the nation, or carry out terrorist activities. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 that Revised Regulations on Religious Affairs (2018) explicitly prioritised national security considerations, aimed at countering “harmful” foreign influences on China’s officially recognised religions, over individuals’ religious freedoms.

‘The Measures for the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services (2022) came into effect on 1 March 2022, banning the use of the internet to promote extremism, “religious fanaticism” or messages that were not consistent with the CCP’s wishes. A permit was now required to proselytise online. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 that even registered churches were forced to cease streaming their popular online services after these measures came into effect.

‘SARA’s Measures for the Administration of Places of Religious Activity (2023) came into force on 1 September 2023 and govern the establishment and operation of religious venues in China. The Measures for the Administration of Places of Religious Activity (2023) formalised: existing obligations placed on religious venues and their management to teach and promote political orthodoxy (including upholding the CCP’s leadership and Xi Jinping Thought); adherence to the Sinicisation of religion (by enforcing the use of Mandarin at services and ensuring the architecture complies with the classical “Chinese” style); limits on religious activities to the confines of government-approved venues, and; prevention of foreign forces from “using religion for infiltration”. According to in-country sources, these changes in

<sup>21</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, [The State of Religion in China](#), Last updated 15 May 2024

<sup>22</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom- China: Xinjiang](#), 26 June 2024



2023 sought to isolate religious venues from each other to reduce the influence of individual leaders, who may have threatened the authority of the CCP. To support these changes, religious management personnel had term limits imposed on their rule and all major decisions must now be made by a committee vote, not an individual leader.<sup>23</sup>

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## 8.4 Registered religious groups

### 8.4.1 The 2023 USSD IRF report stated:

‘The 2020 Administrative Measures for Religious Groups regulate the organization, function, offices, supervision, projects, and economic administration of communities and groups at the national and local levels. The measures state that only registered groups may operate legally and stipulate that religious organizations must support the leadership of the CCP, adhere to the direction of Sinicization, and implement the values of socialism. Additional administrative measures require all clergy to pledge allegiance to the CCP and socialism, “resist illegal religious activities and religious extremist ideology, and resist infiltration by foreign forces using religion.” The measures also provide that “entrance to religious places of worship should be regulated through strict gatekeeping, verification of identity, and registration.”’<sup>24</sup>

### 8.4.2 A backgrounder from Council on Foreign Relations on the state of religion in China noted that: ‘Chinese public security officials monitor both registered and unregistered religious groups to prevent activities that “disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens or interfere with the educational system of the State,” as stipulated by the Chinese constitution.’<sup>25</sup>

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## 8.5 Unregistered religious groups

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

‘...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’.<sup>26</sup>

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## 9. State treatment of Muslims in Xinjiang province

### 9.1 Regional law and regulations

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

<sup>23</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report China](#) (paragraph 3.52- 3.54), 27 December 2024

<sup>24</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom- China: Xinjiang](#), 26 June 2024

<sup>25</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, [The State of Religion in China](#), Last updated 15 May 2024

<sup>26</sup> Netherlands- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [Country of origin information report China](#), 1 July 2020

9.1.2 The Human Rights Watch Report ‘Eradicating ideological viruses - China’s campaign of repression against Xinjiang’s Muslim’ 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<sup>27</sup>]. People who have been to these countries, have families, or otherwise communicate with people there, have been interrogated, detained, and even tried and imprisoned.’<sup>28</sup>

9.1.3 The 2023 USSD IRF report stated:

‘In addition to the national counterterrorism law, Xinjiang has its own counterterrorism and “de-extremification” laws containing similar provisions to the national law regarding “religious extremism.” These laws ban wearing long beards, full face coverings, and religious dress; expanding “halal practice” beyond food and daily prayer; and “interfering” with weddings, funerals, or inheritance, among other provisions. The law limits the information that may be released to the public following any incident authorities define as a terror attack. Other XUAR regulations also prohibit veils that cover the face, homeschooling children, “abnormal beards,” practicing religion in government buildings, and wearing clothes associated with “religious extremism.” These regulations do not define “abnormal” or “religious extremism.”

‘XUAR religious affairs regulations prohibit “the use of religion” to obstruct family planning, and the XUAR 2017 Regulation on De-extremification provides that “deliberately interfering with or undermining the implementation of family planning policies” as one of the 15 “primary expressions” of religious extremism.

‘... Authorities in the XUAR have defined 26 religious activities as illegal without prior government authorization. Regional regulations stipulate no classes, scripture study groups, or religious studies courses may be offered by any group or institution without prior government approval. No religious group may carry out any religious activities, including preaching, missionary work, proselytizing, and ordaining clergy, without government approval. Regional regulations also ban editing, translation, publication, printing, reproduction, production, distribution, sale, and dissemination of religious publications and audiovisual products without authorization.

‘Xinjiang officials require minors to complete nine years of compulsory public education before they may receive religious education outside of school. National and Xinjiang-specific 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 local regulation further prohibits any form of religious activity in

<sup>27</sup> HRW, [“Eradicating Ideological Viruses”: China’s Campaign of...](#) Table 1, 9 September 2018

<sup>28</sup> HRW, [“Eradicating Ideological Viruses”: China’s Campaign of Repression....](#), 9 September 2018

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 national Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency Law states children affected by ethnic separatism, extremism, and terrorism, 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 the school.

‘Xinjiang regulations on “public safety” passed in 2022 call for a “crackdown” on “ethnic separatist forces, violent terrorist forces, religious extremist forces, and other illegal and criminal activities that endanger national security....” The regulations also call for “controlling illegal religious activities, illegal religious propaganda materials, and illegal religious network dissemination in accordance with the law and continuing to promote deradicalization.” The regulations reference *xie jiao* (heterodox teachings) and state that authorities will “carry out anticult [i.e., anti-xie jiao] propaganda and education, prevent and crack down on various cult organizations, and effectively educate and reform individuals involved in cults.” They also call for full implementation across the entire XUAR of a grid system of social surveillance that had previously been used only in certain parts of the region.

‘... According to media and NGO reports, the central government and XUAR authorities continued to cite what they called the “three evils” of “ethnic separatism, religious extremism, and violent terrorism” as justification to enact and enforce restrictions on religious practices of Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, Hui, and members of other Muslim and non-Muslim religious groups.’<sup>29</sup>

9.1.4 The Pew Research Center report of August 2023 noted that ‘Many religious practices among Uyghurs and other Muslim-majority ethnic groups in Xinjiang that previously were respected as ethnic customs now face tight regulation. For instance, the government has banned face coverings in public; made it illegal for parents to let children attend religious activities or religious schools; ...and increased penalties on Muslims who follow traditional Islamic marriage and divorce laws.’<sup>30</sup>

9.1.5 The 2024 DFAT report stated:

‘On 1 February 2024, the Xinjiang Regulations on Religious Affairs (Amendments) (2024) came into force, under which religions in the region must “practice the core values of socialism” and “adhere to the direction of Sinicisation”. Under the Xinjiang Regulations on Religious Affairs (Amendments) (2024), Sinicisation applies to all places of worship, which would “reflect Chinese characteristics and style in terms of architecture, sculptures, paintings, decorations”.’<sup>31</sup>

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## 9.2 Government messaging

The Congressional Executive Commission on China (CECC), a group created by the US Congress to monitor human rights and the development

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<sup>29</sup> USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom- China: Xinjiang](#), 26 June 2024

<sup>30</sup> Pew Research Center, [Islam in China](#), 30 August 2023

<sup>31</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report China](#) (paragraph 3.35), 27 December 2024

of the rule of law in China<sup>32</sup>, noted in their 2024 annual report:

During this reporting year, PRC officials stressed the importance of “maintaining social stability” and implementing counterterrorism efforts in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), in what human rights advocates feared signaled a continuation of repressive policies in the region. In August 2023, Chinese leader Xi Jinping visited Urumqi municipality, XUAR, where he told Communist Party and government officials that they must prioritize the maintenance of social stability and heighten counterterrorism efforts. In the same speech, Xi called on officials to “more deeply promote the sinicization of Islam and effectively control all types of illegal religious activities.”

‘... In May 2024, during a visit to the XUAR, top security official Chen Wenqing called for the “normalization” of counterterrorism efforts in the region and echoed Xi’s calls regarding the need to maintain regional social stability. On the day after Chen’s visit, a Ministry of Public Security spokesman said at a press conference that there had not been a terrorist attack in China in more than seven years.’<sup>33</sup>

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### 9.3 Restrictions on Muslims and Islamic culture

9.3.1 The Pew Research Center report of August 2023 noted that authorities: ‘... cracked down on “underground” Muslim schools and study groups... The Chinese government also has intensified the enforcement of restrictions on the number of children allowed for Uyghur Muslims and severely punished those who exceed the limit.’<sup>34</sup>

9.3.2 The Compilation of information prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Council (OHCHR) Periodic review published in November 2023 noted that:

‘OHCHR stated that serious human rights violations had been committed in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region in the context of the Government’s application of counter-terrorism and counter “extremism” strategies. The implementation of those strategies and associated policies had led to interlocking patterns of severe and undue restrictions on a wide range of human rights, which were characterized by a discriminatory component, as the underlying acts often directly or indirectly affected Uighur and other predominantly Muslim communities. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed similar concerns’<sup>35</sup>

9.3.3 The same report went on to note that the OHCHR recommended that China: ‘... undertake a full review of the legal framework governing national security, counter-terrorism and minority rights to ensure their compliance with binding international human rights law, and urgently repeal all discriminatory laws, policies and practices against Uighur and other predominantly Muslim minorities, in particular those that had led to serious human rights violations.’<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> CECC, [About](#), no date

<sup>33</sup> CECC, [2024 Annual Report](#) (page 258), 16 December 2024

<sup>34</sup> Pew Research Center, [Islam in China](#), 30 August 2023

<sup>35</sup> UNHRC, [Universal Periodic Review- China](#) (page 8), 15 November 2023

<sup>36</sup> UNHRC, [Universal Periodic Review- China](#) (page 8-9), 15 November 2023

9.3.4 Human Rights Watch reported in June 2024 that:

‘Chinese authorities in Xinjiang have been systematically changing hundreds of village names with religious, historical, or cultural meaning for Uyghurs into names reflecting recent Chinese Communist Party ideology, Human Rights Watch said today [18 June 2024].

‘Human Rights Watch research has identified about 630 villages where the names have been changed that way. The top three most common replacement village names are “Happiness,” “Unity,” and “Harmony.”

‘... The names of about 3,600 of the 25,000 villages in Xinjiang were changed during this period [2009-2023]. About four-fifths of these changes appear mundane, such as number changes, or corrections to names previously written incorrectly. But the 630, about a fifth, involve changes of a religious, cultural, or historical nature.’<sup>37</sup>

9.3.5 The 2024 DFAT report stated:

‘In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 that Uyghurs experience persistent intimidation by authorities, and that the risk of being arbitrarily detained had instilled a sense of fear amongst the Uyghur community, promoting a habit of self-censorship that made engaging with this community difficult

‘... International human rights organisations, academics and the international media have documented the Government of China’s use of inward migration by Han Chinese to alter the demographic balance in Xinjiang. The so-called leaked Xinjiang Police Files of March 2022 stated the government’s view that “severe imbalances in the distribution of the ethnic population” necessitated the moving of 300,000 Han Chinese settlers into southern Xinjiang”. Local governments have actively promoted inter-marriage between Han Chinese men and Uyghur women.

‘... Expressions of Islamic or Uyghur identity in Xinjiang are subject to strict controls, with restrictions placed on cultural dress, beards, language and dietary habits. For example, international media reported on the 2019 arrest and sentencing to 15 years in prison of Zahir Memet for “wearing long clothes, covering her face, and wearing a hijab” between May 2010 and 2015, against the advice of local village officials. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 that Uyghurs were not allowed to grow beards or use certain expressions, including the traditional greeting *As-salamu alaykum*, for fear of getting into trouble with authorities. According to international media reports in 2020, Uyghurs were forced by officials to consume *haram* foods like pork and drink alcohol. Uyghurs were also banned from naming children “overly religious” names and threatened they would be barred from the *hukou* household registration system that provided access to healthcare and education.

‘... In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 that Muslim holy books such as the Quran were rarely available in mosques, bookshops, or homes in Xinjiang. In-country sources further reported that books written in the Uyghur script were restricted in local libraries and locked away, with access only granted upon written permission from an individual’s work unit. Religious practices such as attending worship at mosques or fasting were actively discouraged or banned in Xinjiang. Access to sites of religious significance were

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<sup>37</sup> HRW, [China: Hundreds of Uyghur Village Names Change](#), 18 June 2024



restricted for Uyghurs.’<sup>38</sup>

- 9.3.6 The Center for East Turkistan National Interest (CETNI), a non-profit, international research and think-tank-oriented organisation founded by a group of Uyghur academics and experts<sup>39</sup>, published a report in July 2024 which noted that:

‘Before 2017, many school-age Uyghur children lived at home with parents or grandparents, as did under-age small children. Some older boarders could return home on weekends. With the mass detentions, children are sent to new schools/camps; even children from families not yet decimated by mass detentions or forced labor are sent to permanent boarding schools. [The] Currently available number of Uyghur children held in separation from their families, is 883,000, between 2017-2019. This figure would include 500,000 children already previously held [in] boarding schools, as mentioned in a 2017 Chinese government document referenced by the New York Times; the figure also includes an additional estimate of 383,000 Uyghur children sent to boarding schools from 2017 to 2019, as calculated by Adrian Zenz [a scholar and Senior Fellow and Director in China studies at the US-based Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation<sup>40</sup>]. Today, the number could be much higher, since the Chinese government since 2019 has continuously implemented the same policy of removing Uyghur children, as part of their elimination of future Uyghur generations.’<sup>41</sup>

- 9.3.7 The Diplomat, an international current-affairs magazine for Asia-Pacific<sup>42</sup>, reporting on the situation in Xinjiang province in August 2024, noted that:

‘In the current secondary stage [of education], over a million Uyghur children (and increasing), have been taken from their families and sequestered in Chinese boarding schools, where their language and culture is forbidden.

‘... Uyghur culture has been decapitated, by way of the disappearance and silencing of an entire class of cultural leaders, artists, scholars, and the like. Historic monuments and holy places are bulldozed, so that they cannot form a foundation of any resurgent future Uyghur identity. All this points to the intended outcome of the entire genocide project: The breaking and eradication of Uyghur identity – while fashioning Chinese-speaking factory workers out of the survivors.’<sup>43</sup>

- 9.3.8 The same source noted in a January 2025 article that: ‘The Uyghur language has been marginalized in schools, and religious sites have been systematically destroyed or repurposed.’<sup>44</sup>

- 9.3.9 Voice of America noted in a report from October 2024 that:

‘The European Parliament overwhelmingly passed an emergency resolution Thursday condemning the Chinese government’s persecution of Uyghurs and urging China to immediately and unconditionally release detainees, including Uyghur economist Ilham Tohti and Gulshan Abbas. ... The

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<sup>38</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report China](#) (paragraph 3.27, 3.31, 3.33- 3.34), 27 December 2024

<sup>39</sup> CETNI, [About CETNI](#), no date

<sup>40</sup> Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, [Adrian Zenz, Ph.D.](#), no date

<sup>41</sup> CETNI, [Mass Detention and Forced Assimilation of Uyghur Children in China](#), 19 July 2024

<sup>42</sup> The Diplomat, [The Diplomat](#), no date

<sup>43</sup> The Diplomat, [China’s Genocide Tourism Strategy](#), 19 August 2024

<sup>44</sup> The Diplomat, [Forgotten Voices: The Uyghurs Facing Deportation From ...](#), 25 January 2025

resolution, which was adopted by a vote of 540 in favor, 23 against and 47 abstentions, strongly condemns China's "repression and targeting of Uyghurs with abusive policies, including intense surveillance, forced labor, sterilization, birth prevention measures and the destruction of Uyghur identity, which amount to crimes against humanity and a serious risk of genocide."<sup>45</sup>

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## 9.4 Surveillance

9.4.1 The US State Department's 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: China (the 2023 USSD human rights report), published in April 2024 noted: 'Authorities conducted "household surveys" and "home stays" in which officials or volunteers forcibly lived in Uyghurs' homes and monitored families for signs of "extremism." Authorities also used a vast array of surveillance technology specifically designed to target and track Uyghurs.'<sup>46</sup>

9.4.2 The 2024 DFAT report stated:

'Mass surveillance has been a feature of daily life in Xinjiang since in 2018. As at 2023, Urumqi had approximately 2.1 million CCTV cameras, or 439 cameras per 1,000 people. These cameras were often equipped with facial recognition capabilities able to detect Uyghurs and single out individuals who had security alerts against their name. Uyghurs had been singled out and forced to download/install the Android app *Jingwang* (clean internet) on their mobile devices since 2017. Local police ensured the *Jingwang* app was installed through spot-checks of mobile phones on the street. The app recorded each device's identifying information, scanned its external storage for files it deemed dangerous, and transmitted the information to government servers.

'Technological surveillance in Xinjiang has been supplemented with physical surveillance in the form of enforced homestays with Han Chinese 'big brothers and sisters', who monitor and restrict traditional cultural practices of Uyghurs. Under the *jie dui renqin* (United as One Family) campaign, which commenced in 2018 and continued in 2023, Han Chinese assessed Uyghurs' level of loyalty to China, Mandarin language capability, and degree of attachment to Islam, before they made recommendations on who should undergo 'reeducation'. International media reported that more than one million government workers, mostly ethnic Han Chinese, were sent to Uyghur homes in Xinjiang in the year 2018 alone. Citing the 'discriminatory nature' of the state-run boarding school system in Xinjiang as at September 2023, which violated minorities' rights to "education without discrimination, family life and cultural rights", UN experts stated "schools in Xinjiang are teaching almost exclusively in the 'official language' [Mandarin] with little or no use of Uyghur as medium of instruction, and that the separation of mainly Uyghur and other minority children from their families could lead to their forced assimilation into the majority Mandarin language and the adoption of Han cultural practices".<sup>47</sup>

9.4.3 The same report went on to note that:

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<sup>45</sup> VOA, [EU condemns China for human rights violations against Uyghurs](#), 11 October 2024

<sup>46</sup> USSD, [2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: China](#), 22 April 2024

<sup>47</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report China](#) (paragraphs 3.37-3.38), 27 December 2024

'In-country sources told DFAT that some security restrictions had been lifted in Xinjiang by 2023. In the Post COVID-19 era, President Xi directed local officials to 'show the new face of Xinjiang's openness and self-confidence', leading to a series of choreographed and stage-managed tours for foreign visitors in order to combat 'negative opinions'. Nevertheless, the majority of Uyghur areas retained an oversized police and court presence in 2023, which was still used for processing detainees through the justice system. Police presence remained strong, with international media reports from December 2023 stating that there were more police in Xinjiang per capita than anywhere else in China. However, the overall police presence had become less visible and there were fewer checkpoints, as security services employed more sophisticated technology-driven measures in response to international pressure'<sup>48</sup>

9.4.4 The Diplomat reported in January 2025 that: 'Uyghurs live under constant surveillance in their homeland, with their every move monitored by a dense network of cameras and police checkpoints.'<sup>49</sup>

9.4.5 Amnesty International, who 'have conducted hundreds of interviews on the ground and analysed satellite imagery and official Chinese documents'<sup>50</sup>, noted in April 2025 that those returned from camps were: '... subjected to surveillance and had to undergo regular evaluations with some being made to attend classes regularly. In a significant invasion of privacy, government 'minders' would stay in the person's home for several nights to keep watch on them and their activity. On top of this, ex-detainees often also faced social exclusion, often ostracised by families and friends.'<sup>51</sup>

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## 9.5 Mosques and Islamic spaces

9.5.1 The Pew Research Center report on Islam in China stated that according to data from the Islamic Association of China as of 2014 63% of all mosques (around 24,500) were in Xinjiang<sup>52</sup>.

9.5.2 The Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), established by the Australian Government in 2001 and partially funded by the Department of Defence, are an independent, non-partisan think tank<sup>53</sup>. In September 2020 they reported: '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.'<sup>54</sup>

9.5.3 The Uyghur Tribunal was established following a request from Dolkun Isa,

<sup>48</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report China](#) (paragraphs 3.45), 27 December 2024

<sup>49</sup> The Diplomat, [Forgotten Voices: The Uyghurs Facing Deportation From ...](#), 25 January 2025

<sup>50</sup> Amnesty International, [China's Uighur Muslims: the truth behind the headlines](#), 1 April 2025

<sup>51</sup> Amnesty International, [China's Uighur Muslims: the truth behind the headlines](#), 1 April 2025

<sup>52</sup> Pew Research Center, [Islam in China](#), 30 August 2023

<sup>53</sup> ASPI, [About Us](#), no date

<sup>54</sup> ASPI, [Cultural erasure](#), 24 September 2020



President of the World Uyghur Congress, to Sir Geoffrey Nice QC. The Tribunal was established to investigate 'ongoing atrocities and possible Genocide' against the Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other Turkic Muslim Populations. On 3 September 2020 the Uyghur Tribunal with the assistance from NGO the Coalition for Genocide Response was launched<sup>55</sup>. According to their website the Tribunal 'which has no powers of sanction or enforcement, will confine itself to reviewing evidence in order to reach an impartial and considered judgment on whether international crimes are proved to have been committed by the PRC'<sup>56</sup>. There were 2 hearings from 4 to 7 June 2021 and 10 to 13 September 2021 where the Tribunal heard evidence including witness testimony, NGO reports, expert evidence and information from leaked documents . On 9 December 2021 Sir Geoffrey Nice QC delivered the judgement. The Tribunal's factual conclusions noted that:

'Satellite imagery identified the destruction of, or damage to, approximately 16,000 mosques or 65% of the previous total in the region, evidence matched by direct observations of witnesses. In addition, cemeteries and other sites of religious significance have been destroyed.

'... The Tribunal is satisfied that the PRC Government has implemented a comprehensive policy of destruction of physical religious sites, conducted a systematic attack on Uyghur religiosity for the stated purpose of eradicating religious extremism.'<sup>57</sup>

- 9.5.4 The 2024 DFAT report stated: 'Reports of mosques being closed down or modified are commonplace under the government's Sinicisation campaign to transform religious beliefs, faith, practice and rituals in accordance with a Chinese identity promoted by the Party. According to in-country sources, mosques in Uyghur majority areas of Xinjiang were more likely to have been demolished, abandoned, repurposed or architecturally modified than in other areas of the country ...'<sup>58</sup>
- 9.5.5 The Xinjiang data project, developed by researchers at the ASPI's International Cyber Policy Centre in partnership with a range of global experts, have produced an [interactive map](#) which details Mosques and Cultural sites across the Xinjiang province.

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## 9.6 Birth control and forced sterilisation

- 9.6.1 The ASPI noted in their report, Family de-planning: The coercive campaign to drive down indigenous birth-rates in Xinjiang, published in May 2021, that:
- 'Beginning in April 2017, Chinese Communist Party authorities in Xinjiang launched a series of "strike-hard" campaigns against "illegal births" with the explicit aim to "reduce and stabilise fertility at a moderate level" and decrease the birth-rate in southern Xinjiang by at least 4 children per thousand people from 2016 levels. This followed years of preferential exceptions from family-planning rules for indigenous nationalities.
- 'The crackdown has led to an unprecedented and precipitous drop in official birth-rates in Xinjiang since 2017. The birth-rate across the region fell by

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<sup>55</sup> Uyghur Tribunal, [About](#), no date

<sup>56</sup> Uyghur Tribunal, [About](#), no date

<sup>57</sup> Uyghur Tribunal, [Judgment](#), 9 December 2021

<sup>58</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report China](#) (paragraph 3.35), 27 December 2024

nearly half (48.74 percent) in the two years between 2017 and 2019.

‘The largest declines have been in counties where Uyghur and other indigenous communities are concentrated. Across counties that are majority-indigenous the birth-rate fell, on average, by 43.7 percent in a single year between 2017 and 2018. The birth-rate in counties with a 90 percent or greater indigenous population declined by 56.5 percent, on average, in that same year.

‘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 reproduction processes. Hefty fines, disciplinary punishment, extrajudicial internment, or the threat of internment were introduced for any “illegal births.” Family-planning officials in Xinjiang were told to carry out “early detection and early disposal of pregnant women found in violation of policy ...

‘The Chinese government’s coercive birth-control policies in Xinjiang seek to not only reduce the size of the Uyghur and other indigenous populations but also to dilute their social and political influence through state-sponsored migration and other forms of population control.’<sup>59</sup>

#### 9.6.2 The Uyghur Tribunal found that:

‘The Tribunal heard evidence from multiple witnesses who had been forced into abortions themselves or, as in the case of one witness, who, when working in a hospital, witnessed the forced abortion of near-term babies. In a 2021 report to the Tribunal, the Uyghur Transitional Justice Data quoted a hospital employee who worked as an obstetrician and witnessed the killing of babies immediately after being born.

‘... The Tribunal is satisfied that the PRC Government has effected a deliberate, systematic and concerted policy with the objective of ‘optimising’ the population in Xinjiang by means of a long-term reduction of the Uyghur and other ethnic minority populations to be achieved through limiting and reducing Uyghur births.’<sup>60</sup>

#### 9.6.3 In August 2022 the UN OHCHR report ‘Assessment of human rights concerns in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, Peoples Republic of China’, stated that:

‘Several women interviewed by OHCHR raised allegations of forced birth control, in particular forced IUD placements and possible forced sterilisations with respect to Uyghur and ethnic Kazakh women. Some women spoke of the risk of harsh punishments including “internment” or “imprisonment” for violations of the family planning policy. Among these, OHCHR interviewed some women who said they were forced to have abortions or forced to have IUDs inserted, after having reached the permitted number of children under the family planning policy. These first-hand accounts, although limited in number, are considered credible.

‘... The available information... suggests that coercive measures are likely to have accompanied the strict enforcement of family planning policies post-2017, including in the context of the Government’s purported counter-

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<sup>59</sup> ASPI, [Family de-planning: The coercive campaign to drive ...](#) (pages 4 and 25), 12 May 2021

<sup>60</sup> Uyghur Tribunal, [Judgment](#), 9 December 2021

terrorism and counter-“extremism” policies, and to have been a cause for the significant decreases in the birth rates in Xinjiang generally, and especially in predominantly Uyghur-populated areas. The increase in IUD placements and sterilisation procedures during this period also occurs in the context of coercive family planning policies enforced by strict measures, such as fines, referrals and threats of referral to [Vocational Skills Education and Training Centers] VETC or other detention facilities, in breach of the reproductive rights during the period 2017-2019. Although the policies in XUAR have appeared nominally consistent with the Government’s broader approach to population planning, it appears they are linked to an expansive notion of religious “extremism”, raising further concerns about discriminatory enforcement of these policies against Uyghur and other predominantly Muslim minorities.

‘In summary, there are credible indications of violations of reproductive rights through the coercive enforcement of family planning policies since 2017. The lack of available Government data, including post-2019, makes it difficult to draw conclusions on the full extent of current enforcement of these policies and associated violations of reproductive rights.’<sup>61</sup>

9.6.4 The Pew Research Center report from August 2023 noted:

‘Xinjiang’s birthrate has fallen significantly in recent years: In 2019, the region’s crude birth rate – the number of births per 1,000 people – hovered below the national average (10.5) for the first time, at 8.1, nearly half the rate three years earlier, according to the National Bureau of Statistics of China.

‘The decline in the birth rate is particularly pronounced in southern Xinjiang, which has a heavier concentration of ethnic minorities. For instance, between 2016 and 2018, the crude birth rate in Kashgar, a 92% Uyghur prefecture, dropped in half from 18.2 births to 7.9 per 1,000 people. These large changes in fertility patterns coincide with government interventions, which may have been designed to reduce growth in ethnically Muslim populations in Xinjiang.’<sup>62</sup>

9.6.5 The chart below was taken from the Pew Research Centers report and shows the birth rate in China Xinjiang region and the birth rates for China as a whole<sup>63</sup>.

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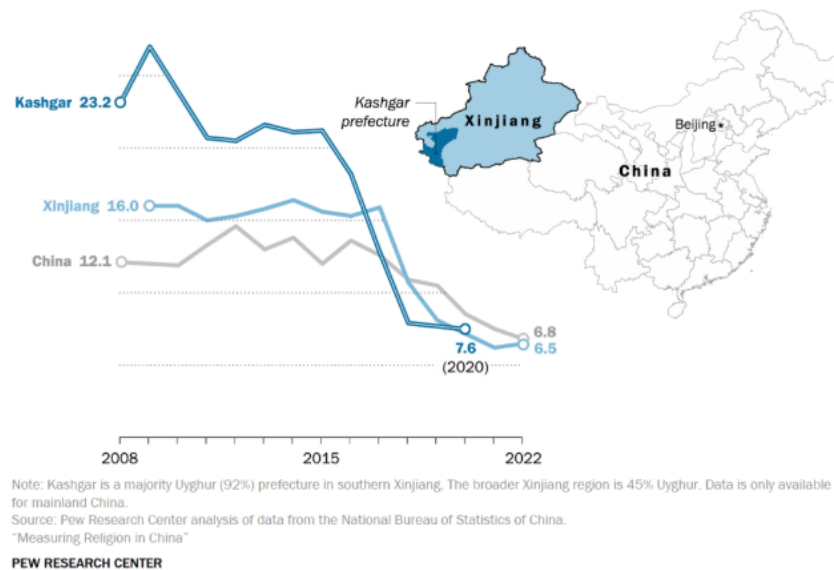
<sup>61</sup> OHCHR, [Assessment of human rights concerns in the Xinjiang ...](#) (pages 35-36), 31 August 2022

<sup>62</sup> Pew Research Center, [Islam in China](#), 30 August 2023

<sup>63</sup> Pew Research Center, [Islam in China](#), 30 August 2023

### Birth rates in China's Xinjiang region have fallen sharply

Number of newborns per 1,000 people (crude birth rate)



#### 9.6.6 The 2024 DFAT report stated:

'Restrictive family planning policies and the use of coercive measures to control Uyghur women's fertility has reportedly shifted the demographic balance in favour of Han Chinese in Xinjiang. In 2020, the Associated Press reported that government officials subjected Uyghur women to pregnancy checks and then forced upon them intrauterine devices, sterilisation and abortion. According to leaked lists of Uyghur camp detainees published in 2021, in some areas of Xinjiang, both Uyghur women and men were detained and later sentenced to prison terms for "having too many children". According to the most recent available official statistics from the 2018 Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook, birth rates in the mostly Uyghur regions of Hotan and Kashgar declined by more than 60 per cent from 2015 to 2018. In 2020, birth rates fell a further 24 per cent across Xinjiang, compared with a drop of only 4.2 per cent nationwide in China.'

<sup>64</sup>

#### 9.6.7 The Simon-Skjoldt Center for the Prevention of Genocide at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, who: 'influence policy makers, and stimulate worldwide action to prevent and work to halt acts of genocide or related crimes against humanity, and advance justice and accountability'<sup>65</sup>, published a report in February 2025 titled Eight years on, China's repression of the Uyghurs remains dire, the report noted that:

'On paper, the birth limits in Xinjiang are the same as the rest of China. However, enforcement is starkly divergent. In other parts of China, violators of birth restrictions face fines, normally income contingent, though these are becoming obsolete as the government exhorts Han citizens to have more children. For Xinjiang's minorities, the range of punishments has included extrajudicial internment, which is not the case in any other part of China.

'A 2019 leaked document from Qaraqash listed the reasons for the internment of nearly 500 individuals from a handful of neighborhoods. The single most common reason cited was giving birth to too many children, for

<sup>64</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report China](#) (paragraph 3.32), 27 December 2024

<sup>65</sup> United States Holocaust [About the Simon-Skjoldt Center for the Prevention of Genocide](#), no date

which 149 people were interned. Testimonies from former detainees and family members of detainees show that internment has been used across the minority regions of Xinjiang to enforce birth control policies. Internment is only one element in a wide range of coercive policies that have compelled women to undergo forced sterilizations or take birth control measures against their will. These policies are outlined in government documents analyzed by Adrian Zenz in a 2021 article.

‘The birth prevention program is part of a larger “population optimization” policy, which aims to reduce both the size and concentration of Turkic peoples, particularly in the southern half of the XUAR. In addition to birth prevention, the policy aims to encourage Han settlement in the south of the XUAR and out-migration of Turkic peoples from the XUAR to other parts of China. The government sees the policy as crucial to the security of the XUAR and the assimilation of Turkic peoples into the Chinese nation.’<sup>66</sup>

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## 9.7 Arrests and prosecutions

9.7.1 The USSD 2024 TiP report noted: ‘According to PRC government documents, local governments, at times, arrested Muslims arbitrarily or based on spurious criminal charges and administrative violations – including violation of birth restrictions.’<sup>67</sup>

9.7.2 The report by Rayhan Asat and Min Kim in association with Yale Macmillan Centers, “Uyghur race as the enemy: China’s legalized authoritarian oppression & mass imprisonment.” Mass Atrocities in the Digital Era Initiative (MADE) Working Paper No. 7, August 2024 analysed data from the Xinjiang Victims Database (XJVD), which compiles several datasets on victims who have been affected by China’s persecution of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims. Data was collected from multiple counties and cities in Xinjiang, such as Urumqi, Qaraqash, and Konasheher’<sup>68</sup>. The data only accounts for those sentenced and does not account for those held in pre-trial detention, administrative detention or ‘re-education’ camps. The report noted:

‘The vague wording of Article 120 provides a pretext to arrest and detain Uyghurs on flagrantly bizarre, unreasonable, and unjust grounds. Database analysis ... shows that arrests of at least 195 individuals were associated with praying or learning to pray, and at least 94 arrests were associated with keeping or growing a large beard. Other reasons factoring into arrest included being in contact with a pre-trial detainee and providing financial support to children studying abroad, among others.

‘... Evidence indicates that trials, if they happened at all, have been cursory and performative rather than substantive. The XJVD Project has documented countless arrests that were almost immediately followed by formal imprisonment in less than a month.’<sup>69</sup>

‘... The Xinjiang High People’s Procuratorate has stated that, in total, at least 540,826 people have been prosecuted in the region from 2017 to 2021. Other regions in China, in comparison, have not seen such a dramatic spike

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<sup>66</sup> Simon-Skjodt Center, [Eight years on, China’s repression of the Uyghurs remains...](#), February 2025

<sup>67</sup> USSD, [2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: China](#), 24 June 2024

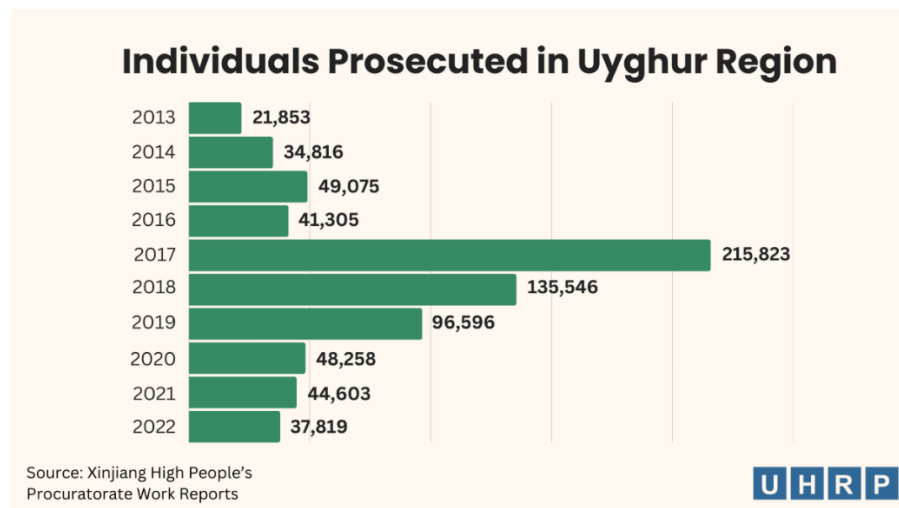
<sup>68</sup> Yale MacMillan Center for International and Area studies, [Uyghur race as the enemy](#), 2024

<sup>69</sup> Yale MacMillan Center for International and Area studies, [Uyghur race as the enemy](#), 2024

in incarceration rates. .... The situation is particularly dire in Konasheher county, where the Associated Press reports that nearly 1 in 25 citizens (or, in terms of the incarceration rate, 4,000 per 100,000 citizens) have been sentenced on terrorism-related charges—a rate approximately 33 times higher than China’s national average. These alarming disparities point to the targeted persecution of Uyghurs in violation of due process.

‘Database analysis reveals that of the 13,114 entries that include a prison sentence (excluding the 25,155 entries that do not), the average prison sentence was approximately 8.80264 years. In February 2022, the Xinjiang High People’s Procuratorate reported that between 2017 to 2021, a total of 540,826 individuals have been prosecuted in the region. The Xinjiang court has stopped publishing new data. With the missing data of 2022, 2023 and 2024, the actual numbers are much higher.’<sup>70</sup>

- 9.7.3 The Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP), an independent nonprofit organisation that promotes the rights of Uyghurs and other Turkic people<sup>71</sup>, produced the below graph which shows that number of individuals criminally prosecuted in Uyghur region from 2013-2022 (no statistics were provided by the regional procuratorate’s annual work report for 2023)<sup>72</sup>.



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## 9.8 Internment and imprisonment

- 9.8.1 In May 2022, a huge cache of police files, including speeches, images, documents and spreadsheets, were published after being obtained by an unidentified source from confidential internal police networks. The source claimed that these documents were hacked, downloaded and decrypted from police servers in Xinjiang and then passed to Dr Adrian Zenz, a scholar at the US-based Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation. Dr Zenz then shared these documents with the BBC. The documents can be accessed on the [Xinjiangpolicefiles website](#).

- 9.8.2 The Uyghur Tribunal found that:

‘... in Xinjiang and at the hands of some part or parts of the PRC Government and the CCP:

<sup>70</sup> Yale MacMillan Center for International and Area studies, [Uyghur race as the enemy](#), 2024

<sup>71</sup> Uyghur Human Rights Project, [About](#), no date

<sup>72</sup> UHRP, [UHRP Analysis Finds 1 in 26 Uyghurs Imprisoned in Region With World's...](#), 25 April 2024



- a. Hundreds of thousands of Uyghurs—with some estimates well in excess of a million—have been detained by PRC authorities without any, or any remotely sufficient reason, and subjected to acts of unconscionable cruelty, depravity and inhumanity. Sometimes up to 50 have been detained in a cell of 22 square metres so that it was not possible for all to lie on concrete (or similar) floors, with buckets for toilets to be used in view of all in the cell, observed at every moment by CCTV.
- b. Many of those detained have been tortured for no reason, by such methods as pulling off fingernails, beating with sticks, detaining in ‘tiger chairs’ where feet and hands were locked in position for hours or days without a break, confined in containers up to the neck in cold water, and detained in cages so small that standing or lying was impossible.
- c. Many of those detained have been shackled by heavy metal weights at their feet and sometimes with feet and hands connected, immobilised for months on end.
- d. Detained women—and men—have been raped and subjected to extreme sexual violence. One young woman of 20 or 21 was gang-raped by policemen in front of an audience of a hundred people, all forced to watch.
- e. Women detainees have had their vaginas and rectums penetrated by electric shock rods and iron bars. Women were raped by men who had paid to be allowed into the detention centre for the purpose.
- f. Detainees were fed with food barely sufficient to sustain life and frequently insufficient to sustain health—food that could be withheld at whim to punish or humiliate.
- g. Detainees were subjected to solitary confinement in cells permanently dark or permanently lit, deprived of sleep for days at a time and ritually humiliated.<sup>73</sup>

9.8.3 The Council for Foreign Relations noted in their backgrounder, China’s Repression of Uyghurs in Xinjiang, updated in September 2022 that:

‘Most people detained in the reeducation camps were never charged with crimes and had no legal avenues to challenge their detentions. The detainees seem to have been targeted for a variety of reasons, according to media reports, including traveling to or contacting people from any of the twenty-six countries China considers sensitive, such as Turkey and Afghanistan; attending services at mosques; having more than three children; and sending texts containing Quranic verses. Often, their only crime is being Muslim, human rights groups say, adding that many Uyghurs have been labeled as extremists simply for practicing their religion.

‘Information on what happened in the camps remains limited, but many detainees who have since fled China described harsh conditions.

‘... Various exposés showed that detainees were forced to pledge loyalty to the CCP and renounce Islam, as well as sing praises for communism and learn Mandarin. Some people reported prison-like conditions, with cameras

<sup>73</sup> Uyghur Tribunal, [Judgment](#), 9 December 2021

and microphones monitoring their every move and utterance. Others said they were tortured and subjected to sleep deprivation during interrogations. Women have shared stories of sexual abuse, including rape. Some released detainees contemplated suicide or witnessed others kill themselves.<sup>74</sup>

9.8.4 Bertelsmann Stiftung (BTI), a German private foundation which ‘stimulates debate and provides impetus for social’<sup>75</sup>, in its China Country Report 2024, compiled by country and regional experts from universities and think tanks<sup>76</sup>, covering the period of 1 February 2021 to 31 January 2023, published in March 2024 noted that: ‘Since 2017, the government has waged an aggressive campaign in Xinjiang, where as many as one million Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims have been subjected to political indoctrination in a network of internment camps. Under Xi Jinping, ethnic policies are becoming increasingly assimilationist.’<sup>77</sup>

9.8.5 The UHRP, with reference to the Xinjiang High Peoples Procuratorate’s annual work reports for 2013-2023, noted in April 2024 that:

‘A new UHRP analysis of official figures indicates that Uyghurs, Turkic and other non-Han peoples in the Uyghur Region account for more than a third (34 percent) of China’s estimated prison population, despite making up only one percent of China’s overall population. When accounting for the total regional population, the Uyghur Region has the highest prison rate in the world at an estimated 2,234 per 100,000.

‘The prison population refers specifically to formal imprisonment under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice, and is separate from the unknown number of people still interned in the region’s camps and other forms of arbitrary detention.

‘Statistics released by the state prosecution in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR)—known as East Turkistan to many Uyghurs—suggest that Uyghurs, Turkic and other non-Han peoples in the region are imprisoned at a rate of 3,814 people per 100,000.’<sup>78</sup>

9.8.6 The US State Department, 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: China, 24 June 2024 (USSD TiP report, 2024), stated:

‘The PRC continued its policies of mass detention and political indoctrination against more than one million Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, ethnic Kyrgyz, and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups, which has occurred in Xinjiang since 2017. ... According to researchers, information available about court records in Xinjiang suggested the government may have begun to phase out the use of internment camps, instead largely channeling detainees into the formal prison system, where they were subject to systematic human rights abuses and forced labor.’<sup>79</sup>

9.8.7 The 2024 DFAT report stated:

‘The large-scale process of arbitrary detention of Uyghurs in Xinjiang first came to international attention in 2017 and reports became more prevalent

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<sup>74</sup> CFR, [China’s Repression of Uyghurs in Xinjiang](#), last updated 22 September 2022

<sup>75</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung, [About us](#), no date

<sup>76</sup> BT, [Transformation Index](#) (Who We Are), no date

<sup>77</sup> BTI, [China Country Report 2024](#), 19 March 2024

<sup>78</sup> UHRP, [UHRP Analysis Finds 1 in 26 Uyghurs Imprisoned in Region With World’s...](#), 25 April 2024

<sup>79</sup> USSD, [2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: China](#), 24 June 2024



after legislation was implemented in late 2018 allowing local governments to set up “vocational skills education and training centres” and other types of “transformation through education organs”...

‘According to the State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, “vocational education and training centres” were established in 2017, in accordance with the law, to “prevent the breeding and spread of terrorism and religious extremism”. .... As at April 2023, the distinction between people being held for “re-education”, on pre-trial remand or other forms of detention remained unclear.

‘... International media reported that between 2014 and 2019, authorities had relocated more than ten per cent of Xinjiang’s population (over two and a half million people) through “labour transfers” to other regions of China ... International media reported in February 2024 that Xinjiang’s “Poverty Alleviation Through Labor Transfer” program continued to expand in 2023 and authorities were actively preventing Uyghurs from “abandoning state-arranged jobs”.

‘...Some detained Uyghurs have later been released from detention, a minority of whom have been able to provide testimony of their lived experience to parties outside of China. Authorities refer to releases as “graduations” because detainees had completed their courses and gained employment ...

‘... Some, but not all, of the known detention centres had closed by 2023. DFAT was unable to verify in 2023 which detention centres had been closed and the exact numbers of Uyghurs still detained. However, international journalists, human rights campaigners and scholars continue to report on thousands of Uyghurs who remain unaccounted for in 2023.’<sup>80</sup>

9.8.8 The Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide report published in February 2025 noted that:

‘The mass internment and imprisonment of Turkic minorities that brought global attention in 2018 and 2019 depended on three main types of institutions: re-education internment camps, *kanshousuo* (detention centers), and formal prisons. Evidence suggests that the Chinese government has since closed most of the re-education internment camps, transferring internees to forced labor, formal prisons, or their homes, in proportions that remain unclear. In at least one case, a re-education center appears to have been transformed into a *kanshousuo*. Chinese government statistics paint a picture of annual prison sentences declining to a level in line with other provinces from 2022. However, very few of the nearly 600,000 individuals given formal prison sentences from 2017 onward have been released, and an unknown number of additional people are held in *kanshousuo*. As the re-education and internment camps closed, the state continued to expand existing prisons and *kanshousuo* and, in some cases, added entirely new ones.

‘... No evidence has emerged of a substantial release of prisoners from among the hundreds of thousands of individuals sent to formal prisons since 2014 (the beginning of the “Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Terrorism”

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<sup>80</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report China](#) (paragraphs 3.40-1, 3.43- 3.45), 27 December 2024

严厉打击暴力恐怖活动专项行动). This is not surprising, given the dramatic increase in long sentences that Chinese government statistics document for Xinjiang in 2016 and 2017. In 2017, 87% of sentences were over five years, compared to roughly a quarter in 2014. In a sample of 312 cases from the Xinjiang Victims Database, 70% of sentences between late 2016 and 2020 were ten years or longer, and 24% were five to nine years. Statistics from the XUAR Procuratorate record the prosecution of 578,645 people from 2017- 2022. Nationally, China's judicial system consistently convicts over 99.9% of those prosecuted. The long sentences, along with the extreme rarity of reports of releases by victims' family members (from among thousands of cases documented in the Xinjiang Victims Database), suggests that the overwhelming majority of those sent to formal prisons during the Strike Hard Campaign have remained in custody.'<sup>81</sup>

9.8.9 Amnesty International noted in April 2025 that:

'The Chinese authorities have detained people for travelling within the country and abroad, for having Whatsapp on their phones, for calling loved ones or for wearing religious clothing.

'Their behaviour is seen as suspicious and they are labelled 'extremist' as they are sent to camps without warning.

'... From the moment people enter the camps, they are stripped of personal autonomy and are subjected to a ceaseless campaign of indoctrination. Every moment of their day is regimented and there is no privacy. They are monitored when they eat, sleep and go to the toilet.

'Many reported they were physically punished if they spoke anything other than Mandarin Chinese - a language that many from Uighur communities do not speak or understand. Everyone Amnesty International spoke to was tortured or subjected to other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment. Many were beaten, restrained, deprived of sleep, subjected to extremely cold temperatures (it can get as cold as -20C in Xinjiang) and forced to solitary confinement.

'Detainees were also forced to attend classes where they were indoctrinated about the 'evils' of Islam and about the wealth, power, and "benevolence" of the President of China and the ruling party.

'... Several people in the camps were sent to prison. Some were given 15-20 year sentences for everyday behaviour - such as setting up a religious book club or allegedly insulting police. At times, there were sham trials where detainees were handed a list of 'offences' and they had to choose a 'crime' they had committed for their detention.'<sup>82</sup>

9.8.10 The Xinjiang data project, developed by researchers at the 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.

9.8.11 The UHRP have compiled a list of [detained Uyghur Intellectual and Cultural elites](#), who they define as 'individuals who have received a university degree or diploma and/or who work in fields where they have made visible

<sup>81</sup> Simon-Skjodt Center, [Eight years on, China's repression of the Uyghurs remains...](#), February 2025

<sup>82</sup> Amnesty International, [China's Uighur Muslims: the truth behind the headlines](#), 1 April 2025

contributions to public intellectual, cultural, and/or political life through writings, lectures, performances, and other public-facing activity.’<sup>83</sup>

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## 9.9 Forced labour

### 9.9.1 The US Department of Labor in their undated report ‘Against their will: The situation in Xinjiang’ noted that:

‘Uyghurs detained in camps and forced to work in factories must endure oppressive conditions. In one internment camp in Kashgar, Xinjiang, Uyghur detainees work as forced laborers to produce textiles. They receive little pay, are not allowed to leave, and have limited or no communication with family members. If family communication and visits are allowed, they are heavily monitored and can be cut short. When not working, the Uyghur workers must learn Mandarin and undergo ideological indoctrination.

‘... Different forms of state-imposed forced labor utilized by the PRC government in the XUAR include prison labor, the “Vocational Skills Education and Training Centers” [VETCs] or reeducation centers, and transfers of non-detained rural “surplus” laborers into factory work, known as Poverty Alleviation Through Labor Transfer. Poverty Alleviation Through Labor Transfer involves local government agencies in the XUAR working directly with companies to relocate people from rural communities to industrial areas for employment, both inside the XUAR and throughout China. The PRC government gives subsidies to companies moving to the XUAR and for employing Muslim-minority workers. These practices heighten demand for members of Muslim and ethnic minority groups that the government wants placed in work assignments where they can be controlled and watched, receive Mandarin-Chinese language training, and undergo political indoctrination. Once at a work placement, workers are usually subjected to constant surveillance and isolation. Given the vast surveillance state in the XUAR and the threat of detention, individuals have little choice but to endure these unspeakable labor and human rights abuses. The Poverty Alleviation Through Labor Transfer program has continued to expand and is now Xinjiang’s primary coercive labor system, with labor transfers occurring more than 3 million times in 2022.’<sup>84</sup>

### 9.9.2 In its August 2022 report, the UN OHCHR stated that:

‘The treatment of persons held in the system of so-called VETC facilities is of equal concern. Allegations of patterns of torture or ill-treatment, including forced medical treatment and adverse conditions of detention, are credible, as are allegations of individual incidents of sexual and gender-based violence. While the available information at this stage does not allow OHCHR to draw firm conclusions regarding the exact extent of such abuses, it is clear that the highly securitised and discriminatory nature of the VETC facilities, coupled with limited access to effective remedies or oversight by the authorities, provide fertile ground for such violations to take place on a broad scale.’<sup>85</sup>

### 9.9.3 Adrian Zenz, a scholar and Senior Fellow and Director in China studies at

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<sup>83</sup> UHRP, [The Database of Detained Uyghur Intellectual and Cultural Elites](#), no date

<sup>84</sup> US Department of Labor, [Against Their Will: The Situation in Xinjiang](#), no date

<sup>85</sup> OHCHR, [Assessment of human rights concerns in the Xinjiang ...](#) (page 43), 31 August 2022

the US-based Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation<sup>86</sup>, published report Forced labour in Xinjiang, published in March 2024:

‘Based on Xinjiang’s intensification of employment and vocational training policies after 2020, I increased my estimate of ethnic persons at risk of coercion through labor transfers from “up to 1.6 million” to “up to 2.0 million”. Adding a conservative estimate of at least several hundred thousand persons affected by camp-linked labor results in a total coercive labor estimate of up to 2.5 million.

‘... According to official figures, Xinjiang had 2.59 million rural surplus laborers in 2019, of which 1.65 million were in the four southern Uyghur-majority prefectures (Aksu, Kashgar, Hotan and Kizilsu). Most are transferred into jobs near their homes. In the first 10 months of 2018, 364,000 or 13% of all labor transfers in Xinjiang were outside people’s home prefectures, and only 1% were to other provinces. However, labor transfers disproportionately target the southern Uyghur heartlands and poor households for displacement. In 2018, the share of labor transfers from Xinjiang to other provinces was 1%, compared to 11% that targeted poor ethnic households. Even so, over 90% of transferred ethnic workers remain in Xinjiang.’<sup>87</sup>

- 9.9.4 Dr Adrian Zenz and I-Lin Lin, a researcher at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation<sup>88</sup>, report, Forced Labor, Coercive Land-Use Transfers, and Forced Assimilation in Xinjiang’s Agricultural Production, published by the International Network for Critical China Studies in December 2024 noted that:

‘Xinjiang operates the world’s largest contemporary system of state-imposed forced labor, with up to 2.5 million Uyghurs and members of other ethnic groups at risk of coerced work. Alongside its campaign of mass internment, the Chinese government is enacting drastic measures to transform the region’s agricultural sector to become increasingly industrialized, vertically integrated, and dominated by Chinese agribusinesses. As part of these policies, the state pressures local Uyghur and other ethnic peasants to surrender the right to farm their land to large commercial operators, then coerces them into wage labor, often in local processing bases run by these agribusinesses. Between 2001 and 2021, land-use transfer shares in Xinjiang grew nearly 50-fold, indicating the staggering scale at which ethnic peasants were rendered landless and then pushed into state-mandated work. This is resulting in profound livelihood changes and tearing apart of organic communities, ensuring that Uyghurs are more easily and thoroughly controlled, surveilled, and assimilated.’<sup>89</sup>

- 9.9.5 The US State Department, 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: China, 24 June 2024 (USSD TiP report, 2024), stated:

‘National policies officially imposed “de-radicalization” duties on Xinjiang-based commercial entities and trade unions, further cementing their role in state-sponsored forced labor under the guise of public security measures. Local governments and businesses received tax breaks and financial subsidies for establishing new manufacturing sites and accepting or

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<sup>86</sup> Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, [Adrian Zenz, Ph.D.](#), no date

<sup>87</sup> Adrian Zenz, [Forced Labor in Xinjiang](#), 7 March 2024

<sup>88</sup> SSRN, [Author Page for I-Lin Lin](#), no date

<sup>89</sup> Adrian Zenz & I-Lin Lin, [Forced labor, Coercive land-use transfers, and ...](#), 10 December 2024

transferring detainees for these purposes, and officials reportedly received promotions and other benefits for their role in the process. ... Authorities continued to hold many detained individuals previously released from internment camps at external manufacturing sites in close proximity to the camps or in other provinces and subjected them to forced labor; authorities transferred others and likely subjected them to forced labor within a separate – and growing – formal prison system. The government continued to coerce minority communities designated arbitrarily as “rural surplus labor” to participate in labor transfers to other areas within Xinjiang and to other provinces as part of a “poverty alleviation” program and exploit them in forced labor. Authorities also used the threat of internment to coerce members of some Muslim communities directly into forced labor in manufacturing.

‘... NGOs report ethnic Han men increasingly force Uyghur and other women from minority communities into marriages under the government’s discriminatory ethnic assimilation policies, placing them at higher risk of forced labor in domestic service and other forms of exploitation.’<sup>90</sup>

- 9.9.6 The CECC 2024 Annual report noted: ‘During this reporting year, authorities in the XUAR maintained a system of forced labor that involved Turkic and Muslim individuals, shifting from a system involving former mass internment camp detainees to one that generally involves people who have not been detained. According to observers, officials use forced labor programs to tighten political and social control over Uyghur and other communities in the XUAR.’<sup>91</sup>
- 9.9.7 The 2024 DFAT report stated: ‘Allegations of forced labour (*hashar*) are common in opensource materials, and although DFAT was unable to verify these claims in 2023, considers them plausible.’<sup>92</sup>
- 9.9.8 The Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide report published in February 2025 noted that: ‘Forced labor continued to expand from 2022 through 2023. While the closure of most internment camps by 2020 has eliminated them as a source of significant labor, the rapid growth of the broader “labor transfer” system suggests that more Turkic minorities were sent to involuntary work placements in 2023 than in any previous year.’<sup>93</sup>
- 9.9.9 Amnesty International noted in April 2025 that: ‘Often, former detainees were sent to work in camps in poor conditions with minimal pay and a discriminatory work environment. They would be taught to sew and would make government uniforms. The pay was too low to live on and many were only allowed leave if another employer took responsibility for them.’<sup>94</sup>

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## 9.10 Families of those detained abroad

- 9.10.1 The Diplomat reported in March 2024 that: ‘Most diaspora Uyghurs have lost contact with loved ones in their homeland since 2017, when communication with overseas relatives could land you in jail. The majority were deleted from

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<sup>90</sup> USSD, [2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: China](#), 24 June 2024

<sup>91</sup> CECC, [2024 Annual Report](#) (page 22), 16 December 2024

<sup>92</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report China](#) (paragraphs 3.43), 27 December 2024

<sup>93</sup> Simon-Skjodt Center, [Eight years on, China’s repression of the Uyghurs remains...](#), February 2025

<sup>94</sup> Amnesty International, [China’s Uighur Muslims: the truth behind the headlines](#), 1 April 2025



personal WeChat accounts, China's main social media platform, leaving them with few options for contacting loved ones still within China.<sup>95</sup>

- 9.10.2 The Rights Practice, a British registered charity and company established to promote human rights<sup>96</sup>, noted in July 2023 that:

'Uyghur relatives of the disappeared face official obstacles accessing vital information as well as threats to not disclose what they know, particularly to anyone overseas. Former Uyghur and Kazakh detainees report being told not to share the details of their incarceration when they were released. Thousands of Uyghurs in the diaspora have been cut off from communications with family members in XUAR bringing heartache and anxiety.

'... A significant number of Uyghurs in the diaspora have no information on the whereabouts of disappeared family members in the XUAR. This may be due to official information not being transmitted to relatives in the Uyghur region or relatives in Xinjiang afraid to share information with family living overseas. While Chinese officials claim that everyone has "graduated" from the VETCs the PRC government has not confirmed that these facilities have closed. Meanwhile a large number of Uyghurs are now in prison where many have been sentenced to terms of ten or more years.'<sup>97</sup>

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## 10. State treatment of Muslims outside of Xinjiang

### 10.1 Policies

- 10.1.1 Citing several sources the CECC noted in a commission analysis of Hui Muslims in 2021 that: 'Chinese authorities previously allowed Hui Muslim communities and individuals limited freedom to practice their religious beliefs; however, authorities have recently implemented policies increasingly similar to those restricting Islam in the XUAR. This increased similarity is likely due in part to Chinese officials' conflation of Islamic identity and extremism as well as the Chinese government campaign to "sinicize" Islam.'<sup>98</sup>
- 10.1.2 The Network of Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD), a coalition of Chinese and international human rights non-governmental organizations<sup>99</sup>, noted in their report 'Will the Hui be silently erased' published in March 2023 that '... the Sinicization policy seeks to change the very beliefs of Islam by inserting "core socialist values" into the religious doctrine itself. The state-led China Islamic Association began leading conferences in December 2020 for the purpose of generating official re-interpretations of Islamic theology from the perspective of Confucianism and "core socialist values" so that they can be in line with "Chinese traditional culture."<sup>100</sup>

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### 10.2 Restrictions on Muslims and Islamic culture

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<sup>95</sup> The Diplomat, [The Uyghur Diaspora's Desperate Search for Family Members...](#), 19 March 2024

<sup>96</sup> The Rights Practice, [Governance](#), no date

<sup>97</sup> The Rights Practice, [Disappeared by the State- Tracing Uyghur Relatives in China](#), July 2023

<sup>98</sup> CECC, [Hui Muslims and the "Xinjiang Model" of State Suppression of Religion](#), 29 March 2021

<sup>99</sup> CHRD, [About Chinese Human Rights Defenders](#), no date

<sup>100</sup> CHRD, [Will the Hui be silently erased?](#), 22 March 2023

10.2.1 The CECC noted in its 2021 commission analysis on Hui Muslims that:

‘... officials throughout China have targeted Hui Muslims and Hui Muslim communities with restrictions and repression similar to that experienced by Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in the XUAR. International observers and Hui community members have stated that the repression of Islam in the XUAR (often called the “Xinjiang Model”) appears to have spread beyond the XUAR to Hui communities living in other locations. 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 reeducation camps in the XUAR.

‘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.’<sup>101</sup>

10.2.2 The CHRD noted in their March 2023 report that:

‘Surveillance cameras have been installed by local police to monitor activity inside mosques in Ningxia and Henan. Hui have also been expected by the government to report on the religious activities of friends and families, with monetary rewards offered to informants.

‘Authorities have sought to introduce the last two “entries”—core socialist values and Chinese traditional culture—through Hui religious leaders. Imams are only able to openly preach contingent on whether they demonstrate loyalty to the government’s Sinicization program. Mosques without licensed imams have been shut down entirely. Officials in Ningxia and Henan now require imams to attend monthly training sessions regarding Party ideology and official policies governing ethnic minorities; for renewal of their imam license they must pass yearly tests regarding Party ideology. Imams are closely policed to monitor their deviation from officially prescribed interpretations of Islam.’<sup>102</sup>

10.2.3 The CECC 2024 Annual report noted: ‘During the 2024 reporting year, the Commission observed the PRC’s use of sinicization policies targeting Hui Muslims, aiming to eradicate religious and cultural distinctiveness while promoting assimilation with Han Chinese culture.’<sup>103</sup>

10.2.4 The 2024 DFAT report stated:

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<sup>101</sup> CECC, [Hui Muslims and the “Xinjiang Model” of State Suppression of Religion](#), 29 March 2021

<sup>102</sup> CHRD, [Will the Hui be silently erased?](#), 22 March 2023

<sup>103</sup> CECC, [2024 Annual Report](#) (page 83), 16 December 2024

‘Regulations prohibiting proselytisation were generally enforced across China in 2023-24, and religious education for those under 18 years was not permitted. For example, international media reported in June 2024 that Heyrinisa Memet was sentenced to 14 years in prison for “providing religious instruction to youth” after she was found to have taught the Quran to teenage children in her neighbourhood at their request.

‘... Overall, an individual’s ability to practise religion is dependent on whether they worship in registered or unregistered institutions, whether they practise openly or privately, and whether an individual’s religious expression or the religion itself is perceived by the CCP to be closely tied to other ethnic, political and security issues. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 that there was generally more religious freedom in Southern China, with less onerous restrictions placed on religions operating in the provinces of Guangdong and Fujian. However, religious leaders of both registered and unregistered religious institutions were subject to greater scrutiny from authorities than ordinary worshippers.

‘... In January 2019, the government-backed China Islamic Association released a five-year plan for the Sinicisation of Islam. The plan outlined a “uniquely Chinese Islam” distinct from Arabic expressions of Islam, warning against trends of “generalisation of the concept of halal”, emulation of “foreign clothing styles”, and imitation of “foreign styles of mosque architecture”. In practice, this policy resulted in the removal of Arabic script from religious buildings, banning religious clothing and the call to prayer, restricting distribution of the Quran, alterations of mosques and closing non-registered mosques. Penalties for not following the policy have included prison terms of up to three years.

‘Islam has been the primary focus of China’s Sinicisation campaign, and religious regulations are vigorously enforced. The Government of China requires Muslim clerics, to be registered, “uphold the leadership of the CCP” and pass a yearly exam to test their ‘ideological knowledge’. Imams must also undergo political education classes as part of a revamped certification program, which has included content related to use of the internet by religious groups, a code of conduct for Islamic religious professionals and Xi Jinping’s speeches. Clerics can only serve in the region where their hukou is registered, which effectively disbarred hundreds of itinerant imams.

‘... The degree to which Muslims can attend mosques, adhere to religious observances like Ramadan, possess religious scriptures and wear headscarves, beards, or other expressions of religious piety, differed across China in 2023. Restrictions on expression of Muslim religious identity were particularly pronounced in regions like Xinjiang, and were less so in regions where Muslims formed a smaller part of the population, or where Muslim minorities were more heavily integrated into mainstream Han Chinese society. For example, Hui were generally permitted by authorities to attend prayers at mosques, wear taqiyah (white caps) or head scarves and possess Qurans, while Uyghurs were not.’<sup>104</sup>

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### 10.3 Mosques and Islamic spaces

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<sup>104</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report China](#) (paras 3.55, 3.61, 3.89- 90 & 3.93), 27 December 2024



10.3.1 Pew Research's report on Islam in China noted that: '... about one-quarter of China's mosques were in ... Gansu (12%), Ningxia (11%) and Qinghai (3%) – while the remaining 11% of mosques were in other parts of the country.'<sup>105</sup>

10.3.2 The CHRD noted in their March 2023 report that:

'Officials have worked methodically to remove signs of Arabic influence from mosques: the call to prayer in Arabic was prohibited in at least Ningxia and Gansu and replaced with the sound of a siren; as with all other buildings, Arabic inscriptions and motifs were removed from mosque walls.

'... The Sinicization measure that has arguably the greatest impact on Hui communities is the closure of mosques via "consolidation" policies and outright demolition. Such measures have been reported in Ningxia, Qinghai, Henan, Gansu, and Yunnan. These closures have inflicted considerable damage on Hui communities given that the heart of Hui community life is the mosque ...

'Authorities in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region have drastically reduced the number of mosques through a policy of "consolidation" begun in 2020. The plan reportedly mandates the closure of all mosques but one within every 2.5 square kilometers, with eventual plans for demolition of the closed mosques. In just one county, Pingyuan, an estimated 50 mosques were closed under this policy. Plans for implementing this policy have reportedly been in place since 2017, but local communities have not been shown any official documentation authorizing the closure and destruction of mosques. Such "consolidation" actions have also been reported in Gansu province.

'Authorities have also implemented mosque "rectification" measures for remaining mosques on a massive scale. According to independent Hui researchers, nearly every mosque in China with a domed roof and minaret has had these features forcibly demolished over the last five years. Authorities characterized such features as being unacceptable signs of Arab influence. In many cases they have been replaced with traditional Chinese roof designs. Authorities have retaliated against those opposing or even simply documenting the demolitions. Following mass protests in Tongxin, Ningxia over the attempted removal of a mosque dome in August 2018, authorities visited each Hui household in the community requiring each to give consent to the replacement of the dome, issuing threats such as job loss for family members who were public employees. In April of 2019, authorities in Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu province demolished a mosque and reportedly arrested seven or eight people for taking videos and posting them to private groups on WeChat.'<sup>106</sup>

10.3.3 The CECC 2024 Annual report noted:

'The government continued its campaign to remove Islamic architectural elements from mosques or demolish them. Authorities demolished and rebuilt Xiguan Mosque in Lanzhou municipality, Gansu province; replaced a dome and minarets demolished last year with pagodas at Najiaying Mosque in Nagu town, Tonghai county, Yuxi municipality, Yunnan province; and replaced the dome and minarets of the Grand Mosque in Shadian subdistrict, Gejiu city, Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan,

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<sup>105</sup> Pew Research Center, [Islam in China](#), 30 August 2023

<sup>106</sup> CHRD, [Will the Hui be silently erased?](#), 22 March 2023

with a pagoda rooftop and pagoda towers, stripping these mosques of traditional Islamic architectural features. The Grand Mosque in Shadian has served as one of the most significant centers of worship for Hui Muslims, known as “the Mecca of the Hui.” Fearing protest, officials went to residents’ homes in Shadian, asking them to sign a letter agreeing “not to take pictures of and not to post on social media news about the mosque alteration work.” When rebuilding the Grand Mosque, authorities reportedly installed surveillance cameras inside the mosque’s prayer hall over the objections of the mosque management committee. Experts commented that the reconstruction of the Najiaying and Grand Mosques marked the conclusion of the nationwide mosque sinicization campaign as the last major mosques in China lost their Arabic-style features.<sup>107</sup>

#### 10.3.4 The 2024 DFAT report stated:

‘Sinicisation of mosques, including removing Arabic text and architectural features, was occurring throughout China in large cities like Beijing and Shanghai in 2023, but was most prevalent in western China. Since 2018, Hui mosques across [Ningxia Autonomous Region] NAR were forcibly renovated or shuttered and religious schools were demolished. In a prominent example, international media reported in 2018 on authorities in NAR’s Tongxin county efforts to demolish the Weizhou Grand Mosque after stating it lacked the right building permits, leading to mass protests. Facing local resistance, authorities visited every household in Weizhou and reportedly pressured residents to sign letters stating their acquiescence to “renovate” the mosque by removing its main dome and domed minarets. State employees were threatened in 2019 with being fired if they did not sign the letter. The Weizhou Grand Mosque was then closed, with its main dome and minarets replaced with tiled Buddhist-style pagodas. Violent clashes have also broken out in other areas of China, including Nagu, Yunnan in 2023 aimed at stopping efforts to demolish the dome of the historic Najiaying Mosque. In-country sources told DFAT in 2023 that there was nothing the Hui community could do to stop the authorities’ persistent attempts to Sinicize mosques in Yunnan.’<sup>108</sup>

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### 10.4 Detention of Hui cultural, intellectual and legal figures

#### 10.4.1 The CHRD noted in their March 2023 report that:

‘Publishers of books on topics related to Islam and Hui are among those in the Hui community who authorities have targeted with the heaviest penalties. Beijing-based publisher Ma Yinglong was arrested in 2017 for illegal publishing and terrorism; he is believed to still be in detention in Xinjiang while his bookstore and publishing company Qingzhen Shuju have been shut down. Qingzhen Shuju had been a major publisher of Islamic religious texts and Chinese translations of Arabic publications. Another publisher based in Yunnan, Ma Zhixiong, was imprisoned in 2015 and released on probation in 2020, and reported humiliating treatment in prison: he was interrogated daily with others while naked and forced to maintain a squatting position with his hands over his head... The imprisonment of Hui intellectuals follows a pattern of Chinese authorities’ imprisoning Uyghur intellectuals and

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<sup>107</sup> CECC, [2024 Annual Report](#) (pages 83-84), 16 December 2024

<sup>108</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report China](#) (paragraph 3.91), 27 December 2024

cultural leaders in order to destroy the communities' links to their cultural and religious heritage. These publishers and writers played an integral role in maintaining Hui cultural and religious life by connecting and engaging with Hui community members across China.'<sup>109</sup>

#### 10.4.2 The same report stated:

'Chinese authorities have harassed, threatened, and detained lawyers for representing Hui clients charged in connection with their religious identity or activities. Instead, authorities have forced Hui detainees to accept representation by government-appointed attorneys... [an] interviewee informed CHRD that authorities in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region in 2019 warned lawyers against attempting to represent Hui defendants who had been detained for their refusal to consent to the government's removal of a mosque minaret. The defendants were members of the leadership committee of the Weizhou Grand Mosque in Ningxia's Tongxin county... Consequently, the defendants were assigned government appointed lawyers and later convicted for "criminal syndicate activity."'<sup>110</sup>

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### 10.5 Labour transfers

#### 10.5.1 The CHRD noted in their March 2023 report that:

"Poverty alleviation" is [a] Chinese government policy with a significant impact on Hui social, cultural, and economic rights. Officials have implemented two major poverty alleviation programs among Hui communities that require relocation: "ecological migration" and domestic "labor transfers" to more economically developed regions within China. In designing these programs, authorities have failed to conduct consultations with the communities that would be seriously affected. Officials have stated that the goals of these policies include assimilation of minority groups. These policies have forced the integration of ethnic minority communities into Han Chinese-dominant cities, where Hui find their employment opportunities limited to unstable and low-paying wage work.'<sup>111</sup>

#### 10.5.2 The same report also noted that:

'The other major "poverty alleviation" policy resulting in relocation and dispersal for Hui communities is the practice of domestic "labor transfers" coordinated by authorities in Ningxia, Gansu, Qinghai, and Yunnan, where majority-Hui communities are concentrated. Government officials run these programs in conjunction with companies and other cities or regions seeking workers.

'These "labor transfer" programs have displaced hundreds of thousands of people at any given time. In 2020, the Ningxia government had coordinated the "labor transfer" of 817,600 residents to work in the coastal province of Fujian and other parts of China as of August. In Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu province, 550,000 out of 2 million total residents of the province was working as transferred labor outside of Gansu, according to numbers reported in 2020. Some of these local governments have been

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<sup>109</sup> CHRD, [Will the Hui be silently erased?](#), 22 March 2023

<sup>110</sup> CHRD, [Will the Hui be silently erased?](#), 22 March 2023

<sup>111</sup> CHRD, [Will the Hui be silently erased?](#), 22 March 2023

engaged in labor transfers of their residents for decades—Ningxia and Qinghai began enlisting residents to work for companies in coastal areas such as Fujian, Guangdong, and Shanghai as early as 2005.

‘Although there is no available official data tracking the exact number and proportion of Hui people involved in “labor transfers,” there are indications that the Hui people in particular are significantly impacted. A free trade-zone official from Ningbo met with government leaders from both the Ningxia region and Linxia Prefecture in Gansu Province in 2020 to recruit Hui workers specifically, citing the importance of “ensuring social stability and harmony,” and “strengthening national unity.” Such “labor transfer” coordination is discriminatory as it targets Hui communities to achieve political goals.’<sup>112</sup>

10.5.3 The US Department of Labor in their undated report ‘Against their will: The situation in Xinjiang’ noted that:

‘Beyond the XUAR, in the coastal Chinese province of Fujian, Uyghur workers at a factory in Quanzhou face similar abuses. They are made to live in separate dormitories from Han workers, surrounded by an iron gate and security cameras. Uyghurs often work longer hours than their Han co-workers. When finished for the day, the Uyghur workers are escorted back to their dormitories by provincial police officers from the XUAR – not Fujian. The local police say the roll call is to ensure no one is missing. However, Uyghur workers at this factory cannot exercise their free will to leave the premises. Even if they could leave, local police have confiscated their identification materials.’<sup>113</sup>

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## 10.6 Discrimination

10.6.1 The CHRD noted in their March 2023 report that:

‘Hui have historically faced discrimination in the job market and the workplace. In recent years this discrimination has worsened because of the stigmatizing effect of government campaigns marginalizing and criminalizing Hui religious and cultural practices described in preceding sections. A 2020 academic study found that Muslim job seekers in China are more than 50 percent less likely to advance beyond an initial interview than Han Chinese jobseekers, discrimination that would primarily affect Hui, Uyghur, other predominantly Muslim groups. The study also found that despite government mandates to prioritize ethnic minority applicants, state-owned enterprises are as likely as private companies to engage in discriminatory hiring.

‘More recently, such pervasive discrimination has been compounded by religious restrictions in the workplace imposed by local authorities as part of the government’s nationwide crackdown on religion in general ... From at least 2018, public sector employees in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region have been prohibited from appearing at work wearing the white caps Hui men customarily wear. Such bans have also affected students, with female students not permitted to enter school in Sanya, Hainan for a time starting September 2021 because local authorities barred them from attending

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<sup>112</sup> CHRD, [Will the Hui be silently erased?](#), 22 March 2023

<sup>113</sup> US Department of Labor, [Against Their Will: The Situation in Xinjiang](#), no date

school with their headscarves.’<sup>114</sup>

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## 11. Freedom of movement

### 11.1 Internal movement and restrictions

#### 11.1.1 The 2024 DFAT report noted in its assessment:

‘Some Uyghurs reported in 2023 that they could travel internally within Xinjiang, but sometimes faced difficulties traveling to other areas of China ...

‘... DFAT assesses internal relocation within China is not a reasonable option for Uyghurs, as it is unlikely they would be able to integrate successfully into China’s Han Chinese-dominated mainstream society due to persistent official and societal discrimination. Even Mandarin-educated middle-class Uyghurs continued to be judged in 2023 not only by their own behaviour, actions, and loyalty, but also by that of their extended family and friends. Any Uyghur or family member of a Uyghur who publicly speaks out about their treatment, regardless of their profile, is likely to be subject to further attention by the Government of China.

‘Non-Uyghur Muslims did not generally face restrictions on travel internally within China in 2023, although were sometimes subject to additional security checks or specifically targeted for monitoring and surveillance.’<sup>115</sup>

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### 11.2 Entry and exit

#### 11.2.1 The USSD TiP report noted: ‘The government continued to subject Xinjiang’s ethnic minority communities to severe travel restrictions, including through prohibitions on access to passports, which compounded their vulnerability to arbitrary detention and state-sponsored forced labor.’<sup>116</sup>

#### 11.2.2 The 2024 DFAT report stated that Uyghurs:

‘...were often prevented from going overseas. Since 2016, authorities have ordered Xinjiang residents to turn in their passports or told residents that no new passports were available. Uyghurs, particularly those residing in Xinjiang, continued to report great difficulty in getting passport applications approved in 2023.

‘... Members of certain ethnic minority groups, including Uyghurs and Tibetans, had often been denied passports, or had their passports confiscated by authorities or their employers, with a refusal to return them in 2023.’<sup>117</sup>

#### 11.2.3 Human Rights Watch (HRW) in their report ‘China: Travel for Uyghurs Heavily Restricted’ published on 3 February 2025 interviewed 23 Uyghurs living in 9 different countries and 2 experts working on Uyghur diasporas<sup>118</sup>. In their report they noted that:

‘Uyghurs in China applying to visit a foreign country need to provide the

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<sup>114</sup> CHRD, [Will the Hui be silently erased?](#), 22 March 2023

<sup>115</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report China](#) (paragraph 3.46, 3.48 & 3.94), 27 December 2024

<sup>116</sup> USSD, [2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: China](#), 24 June 2024

<sup>117</sup> DFAT, [Country Information Report China](#) (paragraph 3.46 & 5.36), 27 December 2024

<sup>118</sup> HRW, [‘China: Travel for Uyghurs Heavily Restricted’](#) (methodology), 3 February 2025



authorities with the purpose of travel, Uyghurs who left Xinjiang recently or had met with relatives from Xinjiang said. Those applying for family purposes are also required to provide an invitation from a family member abroad, along with their personal information, address, work status, and other documents.

‘Permission comes with strict rules: those travelling must not engage with activists abroad or speak critically about the Chinese government, and must return within a specified time, which could range from a few days to several months. In the case of business travel, Uyghurs are only allowed to visit certain countries, such as Kazakhstan, and are prohibited from visiting “sensitive countries” with large Muslim populations, such as Turkey.

‘... Several people interviewed said that the authorities had told them that only “one person from each family [can travel] at the same time,” effectively holding their immediate family members hostage to ensure their return. Some said that the authorities had also required them to provide a “guarantor” – often another official vouching for them – before granting them permission to travel. Failure to comply with these rules puts their guarantor or family members at risk of harsh punishments. While those who were allowed to travel were abroad, a designated official regularly checked in with them and sought updates on their daily activities. Upon their return, the authorities again confiscated their passports and questioned them about their trip and Uyghurs in the countries they visited.’<sup>119</sup>

- 11.2.4 In February 2025 Radio Free Asia reported that a man who had attempted to flee China in 2015 but was caught and forcibly returned was sentenced to 19 years in prison. The report went on to note that: ‘Some Uyghurs who have tried to escape the repressive measures of the Chinese government in Xinjiang in hopes of a better life elsewhere, or who have gone on religious pilgrimages to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, have been caught by authorities along the way and sent home, according to previous Radio Free Asia reports.’<sup>120</sup>

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### 11.3 Restrictions of those outside of China

#### 11.3.1 The USSD 2024 TiP report stated that:

‘The Ministry of Foreign Affairs continued to confiscate, cancel, or refuse to renew the PRC passports of Uyghurs and individuals from other mostly Muslim ethnic minority groups living abroad, including those with legal permanent resident status or citizenship in other countries, as a coercive measure to lure them back to Xinjiang and likely detain them within the camps. There were also reports that authorities, employing acts of transnational repression, threatened, detained, and forcibly hospitalized these individuals’ family members in Xinjiang in an attempt to silence them and/or coerce their return. The PRC continued to seek the extradition of ethnic and religious minority group members who sought asylum abroad after fleeing exploitation in forced labor, among other human rights abuses, in Xinjiang.’<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Human Rights Watch, ‘[China: Travel for Uyghurs Heavily Restricted](#)’, 3 February 2025

<sup>120</sup> Radio Free Asia, [Uyghur who tried to flee China in 2015 sentenced to 19 years in prison](#),

<sup>121</sup> USSD, [2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: China](#), 24 June 2024



### 11.3.2 HRW noted in February 2025 that:

‘Some Uyghurs living abroad have been able to visit Xinjiang after stringent vetting processes. Those with foreign passports eligible for visa-free travel to China nonetheless have been told by their families that they need to undergo background checks and obtain prior approval from the “neighborhood committee,” a grassroots government unit, and the local police where their families live. Once back in their hometowns in Xinjiang, some have been questioned or required to stay at hotels, not their relatives’ homes.

‘Uyghurs who are citizens of countries that need a visa to visit China face a much longer application process. The process can take up to six months as the Chinese diplomatic missions abroad carry out in-depth background checks. Even participating in nonpolitical diaspora activities, such as sending their children to Uyghur language schools or attending a wedding in the presence of Uyghur activists can result in a visa being rejected.

‘Chinese diplomatic missions have directed some Uyghurs living abroad to join officially organized tours to Xinjiang hosted by the Xinjiang United Front Work Department, a Chinese Communist Party body. To take part in these tours, individuals need to provide to the mission a copy of their Chinese national identity cards, passports, and their home addresses in Xinjiang. The list is then sent to China where it goes through various departments such as the police, including the local police station, the public security bureau, and the unit responsible for counterterrorism, as well as the neighborhood committees.

‘Only approved people can join the official tour. Uyghurs holding foreign passports are additionally required to renounce their Chinese citizenship to take part in these tours. Uyghurs said they joined these official tours as they are a safer option, one that is also faster with an easier visa application process, compared with visiting the region on their own, risking police interrogation and possible detention.

‘Uyghurs who were on these tours described being closely monitored by their United Front handlers and said that they had to seek permission to visit their families, and to speak Mandarin Chinese, even among themselves. They also reported being made to take part in propaganda activities, such as being provided a script – with pinyin, or phonetic, notations for those not fluent in Mandarin Chinese – praising the Communist Party for its Xinjiang policies.

‘Through these controlled visits and tours, the Chinese government has continued to control the Uyghur diaspora, some of whom stay silent or shun activism and even Uyghur cultural activities in hopes of resuming contact with their families and visiting the region. Chinese authorities have long engaged in transnational repression – human rights abuses committed beyond a country’s borders to curtail dissent – against Uyghurs living abroad, targeting activists and those critical of the Chinese government, and their families in Xinjiang.’<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Human Rights Watch, ‘[China: Travel for Uyghurs Heavily Restricted](#)’, 3 February 2025

# Research methodology

The country of origin information (COI) 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](#), 2024. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

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

Commentary may be provided on source(s) and information to help readers understand the meaning and limits of the COI.

Wherever possible, multiple sourcing is used and the COI compared to ensure that it is accurate and balanced, and provides a comprehensive and up-to-date picture 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](#).

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# Terms of Reference

The 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) provides a broad outline of the issues relevant to the scope of this note and forms the basis for the [country information](#).

The following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Religion in China
  - Religious demography
  - Muslims
  - Xinjiang
- Legal framework
  - International conventions
  - Constitution
  - Regulation on Religious Affairs (RRA)
  - Registered religious groups
  - Unregistered religious groups
- State treatment of Muslims in the Xinjiang province
  - Regulations
  - Restrictions on Muslims
  - Mosques and Islamic spaces
  - Surveillance
  - Birth control and forced sterilisation
  - Detention and 're-education centres'
  - Forced labour
  - Families of those detained abroad
- State treatment of Muslims outside of Xinjiang
- Freedom of movement
  - Internal movement and restrictions
  - Restrictions of those outside of China

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# Version control and feedback

## Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **3.0**
- valid from **22 July 2025**

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## Changes from last version of this note

Update to country information

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## Feedback to the Home Office

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](#).

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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 them 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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