

FINDING HUMANITY

A PODCAST SHARING TRUE STORIES OF COURAGE AND PURPOSE

FINDING HUMANITY PODCAST EDUCATION TOOLKITS Season 2: Seeking Justice on the Frontlines

EPISODE 5

Indoctrination and Torture: Stories of a Genocide From Uighur Women in China | Nursimangul Abdurashid and Mihrigul Tursun

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Our goal is to share our insights, research, policy analysis and key findings with hopes to inspire continued engagement and learning around the podcast episodes and the substantial content and topics unearthed in each episode.

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About the Finding Humanity Podcast | Season 2:

For some, fighting for change means risking it all, one's own life. As history has taught us, fighting grave injustice requires courage, perseverance and grit. In season 2 of Finding Humanity Podcast, we unpack the stories of people on the frontlines of change. People who put their bodies on the line to create an equitable and just world. [Learn More.](#)

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EPISODE

Main topics in Episode: Ethnic & Religious minorities; Uighur & Islamophobia

Short Description of Episode: This episode tells the stories of Nursimangul Abdurashid and Mihrigul Tursun, two Uighur women, who are risking their lives to share harrowing accounts of discrimination, death and torture suffered by the Uighur community in China. In the province of Xinjiang in northwestern China, it's been reported that at least one million Uighurs are detained in "re-education" camps — where Chinese authorities have committed human rights abuses against ethnic Uighur Muslims. Despite making up less than 2% of the national population, Xinjiang's prison population grew eightfold from 2016 to 2017, making up 21% of all arrests in China. Between 2017 to 2019, more than 80,000 Uighurs were forced to work in factories across China for little to no pay. Many argue that what the Uighurs are enduring is not simply a violation of human rights or even ethnic cleansing, but meets the United Nations definition of genocide. But who are the Uighurs? And what actually happens in these re-education camps? How does cultural intolerance give way to human rights abuses? In this toolkit, we unpack ethnic cleansing, genocide-- what do they mean and what are the implications on communities impacted by them.

Quick Facts & Data

Religious minorities:

- Government restrictions in 2018 were at their highest level since 2007. The global median score on the Government Restrictions Index (a 10-point scale based on 20 indicators) rose to 2.9 in 2018 from 2.8 a year earlier. [1]
- Asia and the Pacific had the largest increase in government restrictions, while the Middle East and North Africa region continued to have the highest median level of restrictions. [1]
- Among the 25 most populous countries, India, Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan and Russia had the highest overall levels of restrictions involving religion. [1]
- Authoritarian governments are more likely to restrict religion. [1]
- Christians and Muslims continue to be harassed in the most countries. [1]

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- Jews make up less than 1% of the population, yet experience discrimination in 85 countries - the third most of any religious group. [4]
- Government hostilities can include favoritism of a religious group, limits on conversion, foreign missionaries, attempts to eliminate a group, prohibition of worship or practice of certain beliefs, violence towards a minority group, and more. [4]
- While Americans are protected under the First Amendment to practice religion freely, hundreds of countries are not protected by their government and instead harassed for their beliefs. [4]

Uighur:

- The Uyghur have lived in Xinjiang in China for centuries. Mostly Sunni Muslims, the Uyghur comprise more than a third of China's estimated 18 million Muslims. [2]
- At least 1 million Uyghur have been interned since 2017 in more than 85 identified camps within Xinjiang. [5]
- There are around 11 million Uighurs in Xinjiang. [5]
- Xinjiang has something that much of China lacks - natural sources of energy. However, the Uyghurs have not been the beneficiaries of the economic development - they live in poverty in rural areas, far from the urban centres of prosperity. [2]
- Xinjiang is China's largest producer of natural gas and is a key part of the country's Belt and Road Initiative. [5]
- The Uyghurs are one of 55 nationally designated minorities in China. China's constitution officially recognizes the Uyghurs' right to practice their own religion, however in practice the government maintains a tight control over Uighur culture. [2]
- The Uyghur language is related to Turkish, Azerbaijani and Turkmen. Uyghurs are among the oldest Turkic-speaking peoples in Central Asia. They can understand Turkish, but not standard Mandarin. [3]
- The Government Restrictions Index score for China - whose government restricts religion in a variety of ways, including banning entire religious groups - was the highest ever for any country (9.3 out of 10). [1]

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- China claims that Uyghurs hold extremist views that are a threat to security. They point to attacks in 2013 and 2015, which Uyghur militants claimed responsibility for. [5]
- In 2017, the Xinjiang government passed a law prohibiting men from growing long beards and women from wearing veils and dozens of mosques have also been demolished. [5]

[1] Pew Research, Restrictions on religion around the world, [link](#)

[2] Frontline, Facts and stats, [link](#)

[3] Empire, Facts to know, [link](#)

[4] Do something, Religious discrimination, [link](#)

[5] Uighurs, PBS, [link](#)

Topical Background Information & Context

MINORITIES

Minority, a culturally, ethnically, or racially distinct group that coexists with but is subordinate to a more dominant group. As the term is used in the social sciences, this subordination is the chief defining characteristic of a minority group. As such, minority status does not necessarily correlate to population. In some cases one or more so-called minority groups may have a population many times the size of the dominating group, as was the case in South Africa under apartheid.

Because they are socially separated or segregated from the dominant forces of a society, members of a minority group usually are cut off from a full involvement in the workings of the society and from an equal share in the society's rewards. Thus, the role of minority groups varies from society to society depending on the structure of the social system and the relative power of the minority group.

A minority may disappear from a society via assimilation, a process through which a minority group replaces its traditions with those of the dominant culture. However, complete assimilation is very rare. More frequent is the process of acculturation, in which two or more groups exchange culture traits. A society in which internal groups make a practice of acculturation usually evolves through this inherent give and take, causing the minority

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culture to become more like the dominant group and the dominant culture to become increasingly eclectic and accepting of difference.

ETHNIC MINORITIES

An ethnic minority is a group of people who differ in race or color or in national, religious, or cultural origin from the dominant group — often the majority population — of the country in which they live. The different identity of an ethnic minority may be displayed in any number of ways, ranging from distinctive customs, lifestyles, language or accent, dress, and food preferences to particular attitudes, moral values, and economic or political beliefs espoused by members of the group.

Characteristically the minority is recognized, but it is not necessarily accepted by the larger society in which its members live. The nature of the relationship of the ethnic minority to the larger society will tend to determine whether the minority group will move in the direction of assimilation in the larger society or toward self-segregation. In some cases ethnic minorities have been simply excluded by the majority, a striking example being African Americans in the American South during the late-19th and 20th centuries.

Different countries have different combinations of minorities within their borders. Some countries are relatively homogeneous, and the defining characteristics of nationality in their populations appear to apply to almost all members.

RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

The particular religious and philosophical beliefs held by a minority group are often what distinguishes them from the majority. It is therefore vital that the rights relating to religion and spirituality are protected in both law and fact. They include the right to freedom of conscience, thought and religion; the right to profess or not to profess to a religion; the right to change religion and protection against coercion to change religion; the right to manifest religion; and finally, the right of parents to have their children educated in line with their particular beliefs and convictions. However, the practice of forced assimilation still occurs in countries in which there is a dominant majority religion.

According to obligations set out in international treaties, states must allow groups and not just individuals the opportunity to practice and manifest their religious beliefs. Majority religious groups should be afforded no preferential treatment by governments, even if they

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are the recognised state religion. **Although the right to manifest one's beliefs is not an absolute right, any restrictions imposed by the state must be prescribed by law, necessary in a democratic society and for the purpose of serving the public.** Therefore, no state should restrict this right just because the religion in question is not the recognised state religion, or because of differing beliefs.

One particular right allows parents to withdraw their children from particular classes if they do not feel the teachings are in line with their own religious and moral convictions. This can be crucial for minority groups, as state education may reflect the views of the majority religion, possibly to the detriment of other religious groups.

Instruments protecting the right to freedom of religion

International:

- Article 18, Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Article 18, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- General Comment No. 22 on Article 18 (The Right to Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion), Human Rights Committee
- Article 12, International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
- UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities
- Article 6, Resolution 36/55 Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, General Assembly

Regional:

- Article 8, African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights
- Article 12 and 13, American Convention on Human Rights
- Articles III and XXIII, American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man
- Articles 9 and 14, European Convention on Human Rights
- Articles 10, 14, 21 and 22, Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union

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Persecution of minority groups

Efforts to forcibly eliminate a minority from a society have ranged from expulsion to mob violence, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. These forms of oppression obviously have immediate and long-term negative effects on those who are victimized. They typically devastate the economic, political, and mental health of the majority population as well. Many examples of minority expulsion exist, as with the British deportation of the French population of Acadia, a group that became known as Cajuns, in 1755. The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw widespread mob violence against minorities, including pogroms against Jews (in Russia) and lynchings of blacks, Roman Catholics, immigrants, and others (in the United States; see Ku Klux Klan). The mid-20th-century Holocaust, in which Nazis exterminated more than six million Jews and an equal number of other “undesirables” (notably Roma, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and homosexuals), is recognized as the most egregious example of genocide in the modern era. In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, ethnic cleansing and genocide in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Sudan, and elsewhere provided tragic evidence that the forcible elimination of minorities continued to appeal to some sectors of society.

PERSECUTION OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

There is a growing epidemic of persecution of religious minorities around the world. These religious minorities are often also **ethnic minorities** who suffer economic and social isolation as well.

All over the world, people – and whole communities – are suffering from persecution purely because of their religion or beliefs. This kind of violence – including attempts to annihilate whole religious groups – is on the rise. In the past five years alone, there have been two mass atrocities which meet the United Nations’ legal definition of genocide.

August 22 – a day specially established by the United Nations to help raise awareness of this discrimination and abuse – shines a light on those dark corners where acts of violence based on religion or belief are a daily reality.

Anti-Christian violence in Sri Lanka

On Easter in Sri Lanka, at least 290 Christians inside churches were killed as bombs went off across several cities. Approximately 7% of Sri Lanka’s 21 million people are Christian, most of

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them Roman Catholics, writes Catholic studies scholar Mathew Schmalz, who lived in Sri Lanka while doing his research on Catholicism in the island country's southwest and northern parts. Today, explains Schmalz, these Christians have become targets of a newly emerging "militant form of Buddhism." The long history of tensions with Christians in Sri Lanka goes back to the country's colonial past, starting in the 16th century, as well as present-day ethnic and religious tensions. Following independence, tensions started in the 1960s with the Sri Lankan government taking over church schools. In recent years, Sri Lanka's ultra-nationalist Buddhist organization, the Bodu Bala Sena – also known as Buddhist Power Force – has demanded that Pope Francis apologize for the "atrocities" committed by colonial powers.

Exclusion of Muslims in India

In India, historian Haimanti Roy found evidence of religious discrimination in a citizen documentation process recently completed in India's northeastern state of Assam. The process declared approximately 1.9 million out of 30.5 million people "foreign." "Most were women, members of oppressed castes, religious minorities or poor," Roy writes. She adds that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party now plan a national extension of the citizen registration process, though "it is unclear when it would begin, how long it would take and which government agency would lead the process." But, she explains, Modi's commitment to Hindu nationalism – an ideology that promotes India as a Hindu nation – has already raised concern that any national citizen ID effort will target Muslims, India's largest majority.

Turkish Christians

Christians have lived in the region that is modern-day Turkey since the first century when Christianity emerged, writes scholar Ramazan Kılınc. But their numbers are declining. The percentage of Turkey's population that identifies as Christian has dropped from nearly 25% in 1914 to less than 0.5% today. Kılınc explains that after the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, in 1922, Christians suffered discrimination from time to time. But under President Recep Erdogan, who took office in 2014, a "rising populist nationalism" is worsening attitudes toward Christian minorities.

Rohingya crisis

In 2016, atrocities perpetrated by the Burmese military against the Rohingya Muslims in

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Rakhine state reached the level of genocide, resulting in more than 700,000 people forcibly displaced to Bangladesh in pursuit of a safe haven.

As the independent international fact-finding mission on Burma reported, “the nature, scale and organization of the operations” suggested a level of pre-planning and design on the part of the Tatmadaw (military) leadership.” The atrocities reinforced the vision of the commander-in-chief, senior-general Min Aung Hlaing, who sought a solution to what he referred to as “The Bengali problem.” By the Bengali problem he meant the Rohingya Muslims who for decades have been referred to as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.

Daesh’s reign of terror

In 2014, Daesh (Islamic State, ISIS, ISIL) attacked religious minority groups in Iraq in an attempt to destroy them and establish a purely Islamic state. Daesh’s campaign of terror involved murder, kidnapping, people trafficking, rape, sexual slavery and the destruction of cultural heritage. All this because the victims belonged to different religious groups.

Persecution in Pakistan

In Pakistan, religious minorities, including Christians and Ahmadis, are subjected to severe discrimination that often translates into acts of violence perpetrated with impunity. For example, a Christian couple, Shahzad and Shama Masih, were beaten and burnt alive by a mob for allegedly desecrating the Koran.

Sources/Extracted from:
Britannica, Minorities, [link](#)
Minority rights, Religion, [link](#)
Forbes, Wake-up call on religious persecution, [link](#)
The Conversation, Religious minorities around the world, [link](#)
Scholastic, Ethnic minority, [link](#)

ISLAMOPHOBIA

A phobia, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, is an exaggerated, usually inexplicable and illogical fear of a particular object, class of objects, or situation. It may be hard for the afflicted to sufficiently determine or communicate the source of this fear, but it exists. In recent years, a specific phobia has gripped Western societies - Islamophobia.

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Researchers and policy groups define Islamophobia in differing detail, but the term's essence is essentially the same, no matter the source:

An exaggerated fear, hatred, and hostility toward Islam and Muslims that is perpetuated by negative stereotypes resulting in bias, discrimination, and the marginalization and exclusion of Muslims from social, political, and civic life.

Islamophobia: a global issue

Islamophobia existed in premise before the **terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001**, but it increased in frequency and notoriety during the past decade. The Runnymede Trust in the U.K., for example, identified eight components of Islamophobia in a 1997 report, and then produced a follow-up report in 2004 after 9/11 and the initial years of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. The second report found the aftermath of the terrorist attacks had made life more difficult for British Muslims.

In a 2011 meeting, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, as well as the League of Arab States, a key partner, identified Islamophobia as an important area of concern. Gallup developed a specific set of analyses, based on measurement of public opinions of majority and minority groups in multiple countries, to guide policymakers in their efforts to address the global issue of Islamophobia.

Globally, many Muslims report not feeling respected by those in the West. Significant percentages of several Western countries share this sentiment, saying that the West does not respect Muslim societies. Specifically, 52% of Americans and 48% of Canadians say the West does not respect Muslim societies. Smaller percentages of Italian, French, German, and British respondents agree.

Examples of islamophobic behaviors

Today, Islamophobia in Europe manifests itself through individual attitudes and behaviors, and the policies and practices of organizations and institutions. Examples—which vary across countries and time—include the following:

- physical or verbal attacks on property, places of worship, and people—especially those who display a visible manifestation of their religious identity such as women wearing the hijab or niqab
- verbal or online threats of violence, vilification, and abuse

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- policies or legislation that indirectly target or disproportionately affect Muslims, and unduly restrict their freedom of religion, such as bans on wearing visible religious and cultural symbols, laws against facial concealment, and bans on building mosques with minarets
- discrimination in education, employment, housing, or access to goods and services
- ethnic and religious profiling and police abuse, including some provisions of counterterrorism policing
- public pronouncements by some journalists and politicians—across the whole political spectrum—that stigmatize Muslims as a group and disregard their positive contributions to the communities and countries in which they live

Recent examples

Recent examples of Islamophobia exist within several countries. Islamophobia has been fueled by public anxiety over immigration and the integration of Muslim minorities into majority cultures in Europe. These tensions have been exacerbated in the aftermath of the economic crash of 2007 and the rise of populist nationalist politicians. They have also been aggravated by high-profile terrorist attacks carried out by Muslim extremists.

In late 2009, the largest party in the Swiss parliament put to referendum a ban on minaret construction. The government opposed the ban, citing harm to the country's image - and particularly Muslims' views of Switzerland. Nearly 60% of Swiss voters and 22 out of 26 voting districts voted in favor of the ban, leading to cries of Islamophobia by leaders in countries such as Pakistan and organizations such as the United Nations.

In 2008, Gallup asked representative samples from a subset of majority-Muslim countries about public perceptions of fair treatment of Muslims in the U.S., France, Britain, and China. While about one-third of this subset say that Muslims living in each of those countries are treated as equal citizens regarding their rights and freedoms, about one-quarter of respondents say these Muslims are not. About 40% of this subset of majority-Muslim countries say they don't know how these four countries treat their Muslim residents. The notion that Muslims in these countries are treated unfairly supports the idea that Muslims in general believe that unfair treatment of Muslims - a component of Islamophobia - does exist in Western societies.

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US MUSLIM TRAVEL BAN

In 2017, Donald Trump signed an executive order banning people from several Muslim-majority countries (such as Syria, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen) from entering the USA, and slamming the door on refugees. After being temporarily stopped multiple times, the US Supreme Court overturned a block on the ban.

The order demonised the vulnerable – those who have fled torturers, warlords and dictators – and those who simply want to be with their families. It was essentially a licence to discriminate, disguised as a 'national security measure'.

At the beginning of 2021, Joe Biden ended the ban on travelles from those majority-Muslim countries.

Sources/Extracted from:

Gallup, Islamophobia in the West, [link](#)

Open society, Islamophobia in Europe, [link](#)

Amnesty, Muslim ban, [link](#)

Related to the episode: UIGHURS

UIGHURS

The Uighurs are a mostly **Muslim Turkic ethnicity** who regard themselves as **culturally and ethnically close to Central Asian nations**. The majority live in Xinjiang, where they number about 11 million people. The region's economy has for centuries revolved around agriculture and trade. Towns there such as Kashgar thrived with the growth of the famous Silk Road trading route. Uighur communities are also found in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan, and several thousand live in Australia.

The Turkic-speaking Muslim Uighurs were traditionally the dominant ethnic group in the region whose Mandarin name, Xinjiang, means simply "New Frontier" — perhaps a reflection of the fact that the region was only brought under Beijing's control in its entirety during the 19th century rein of the Qing dynasty.

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In the early part of the 20th Century, Uighurs briefly declared independence, but the region was brought under the complete control of communist China in 1949. Xinjiang is currently designated an autonomous region within China, like Tibet to its south, but in reality the province has little autonomy from the Chinese state.

Despite an official ideology that recognized them as equal citizens of the communist state, Uighurs have always had an uncomfortable relationship with the authorities in Beijing. In 1933, amid the turbulence of China's civil wars, Uighur leaders in the ancient Silk Road city of Kashgar declared a short-lived independent Republic of East Turkestan. But Xinjiang was wholly subsumed into the new state forged by China's victorious Communists after 1949, with Beijing steadily tightening its grip on the oil rich territory. Its official designation as an "autonomous region" belies rigid controls from the central government over Xinjiang, and a policy of settling hundreds of thousands of Han Chinese there that has left the Uighurs comprising a little less than half of the region's roughly 20 million people.

The Uighurs have deep roots in the region, descending from the ancient Sogdian traders once observed by Marco Polo. Unlike many of the nomadic tribes of Central Asia, the Uighurs are an urban people whose identity crystallized in the oasis towns of the Silk Road. A walk through the bazaars of old Uighur centers such as Kashgar, Khotan or Yarkhand reveals the physical legacy of a people rooted along the first trans-continental trade route: an astonishing array of hazel and even blue eyes, with blonde or brown or black hair — typically tucked beneath headscarves or the customary Uighur felt cap.

Its cosmopolitan setting also gave the Uighurs' homeland a rich mix of religious and cultural traditions. Xinjiang is the home to some of China's oldest Buddhist temples and most celebrated monks, while Islam arrived in the tenth century and became dominant in the subsequent centuries. Most Uighurs today practice a brand of Islam that is peaceful and tolerant and mixed with the mystical strains of Sufism. One of their holiest sites is the tomb of an 18th century concubine who, according to legend, naturally exuded an overwhelming and intoxicating musk.

The People's Republic of China annexed Xinjiang in 1949. At this time, it was estimated the Uyghur numbered around 76% of the region's population. Han Chinese – the country's

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majority ethnic group – accounted for just 6.2%, with other minority groups making up the remaining total. Since 1949, Han migration to the region has diluted the ethnic ratio. Official statistics show the population is now made up of 42% Uyghurs and 40% Han.

Beijing does not recognise the region as a colony. But the 1949 annexation represents colonisation to Xinjiang's Muslim minorities and segments of the population have resisted Beijing's rule. Many refuse to speak Mandarin, while others campaign for independence.

Sources/Extracted from:

BBC, The Uighurs and the Chinese state, [link](#)

TIME, A brief history of the Uighurs, [link](#)

The Conversation, Who are the Uyghurs, [link](#)

REPRESSIONS OF UIGHURS

Beijing has long considered Xinjiang and the Muslim minorities such as the Uyghurs to be “backward”. During the Communist Party's Great Leap Forward (1958-1962), ethnicity and religion were singled out as both “obstacles to progress” and “backwards custom”. Brutal crackdowns in the 1980s and 90s led to significant numbers of Uyghurs fleeing China to seek asylum.

The discovery of dozens of Uighurs at guerrilla camps in Afghanistan after the U.S. invasion of 2001 highlighted the fact that some have, in recent years, been lured by a more fundamentalist form of Islam. Many analysts believe this development has been a reaction to the strict controls imposed by the communist authorities who have restricted religious freedoms: The numbers of Uighurs permitted to make the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca has been limited; Uighur government employees are forbidden from fasting during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan; the political authorities appoint the Imams at every mosque, and often dictate the sermons preached during Friday prayers.

Curbs on religious freedom have been accompanied by cultural restrictions. The Uighur language, written in Arabic script, has been steadily phased out of higher education, having been once deemed by Xinjiang's Communist leader to be unsuitable for China's "scientific

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development." Uighurs in Xinjiang are often denied the right to travel outside of China, or even within it. Those who do manage to move to China's major cities eke out a desperate living as migrant workers, often viewed with distrust and suspicion by the larger Chinese population.

Widespread Uighur alienation has prompted some to resort to violence. Following the 9/11 attacks in the U.S., Beijing convinced Washington to list the little-known East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) as a terrorist organization. Some Uighurs were captured by coalition forces in Afghanistan and sent to Guantánamo, but many have subsequently been released. The specter of Uighur terrorism loomed over Xinjiang after a series of attacks and bombings hit the province during the build-up to last year's Beijing Olympics. The extent of the ETIM's tactical capabilities and its connections to other more prominent terrorist outfits remains unclear. Other exiled Uighur movements are avowedly secular, such as the World Uyghur Congress led by Rebiya Kadeer, accused by Beijing of fomenting the recent riots.

Beijing casts its own role in Xinjiang as that of a benevolent force for progress, citing the economic development spurred by its billions of dollars of investment. To be sure, Urumqi is now a city of skyscrapers, but its population is almost 75% Han Chinese, and the Uighurs claim they're frozen out of jobs — and see themselves as the victims of China's own westward expansion.

In 2017, President Xi Jinping issued a directive that "religions in China must be Chinese in orientation" and "adapt themselves to socialist society". The directive led to a fresh crackdown on religious practice that particularly affected the Uighurs.

Xinjiang is now covered by a pervasive network of surveillance, including police, checkpoints, and cameras that scan everything from number plates to individual faces.

The Chinese government says the measures are necessary to combat separatist violence in the region, but it is accused of exaggerating the threat in order to justify repression of the Uighurs. Many prominent members of the ethnic minority have been imprisoned or sought asylum abroad after being accused of terrorism.

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FINDING HUMANITY

A PODCAST SHARING TRUE STORIES OF COURAGE AND PURPOSE

PERSECUTION OF UIGHURS

Around 1 million Uighurs—more than the population of San Francisco—are locked up in so-called re-education camps. Detailed reports monitoring Chinese government contracts and satellite images of Xinjiang camp construction, in addition to more than 1,000 testimonies from family members of interned Uighurs and Kazakhs, reveal a terrifying picture. Many Uighurs who remain in their homes live under the surveillance of government-assigned Han Chinese “relatives” in forced homestays. The government has mobilized more than 1 million uninvited guests “to aid the military and police in their campaign by occupying the homes of the region’s Uighurs and other Muslim minorities, and undertaking programs of indoctrination and surveillance.”

A new report in Foreign Policy says that China's suppression of Uighurs, Kazakhs and other chiefly Muslim ethnic minorities in northwest China now meets the United Nations definition of genocide, mass sterilization, forced abortions and mandatory birth control part of a campaign that has swept up more than 1.5 million people and what researcher Adrian Zenz calls probably the largest incarceration of an ethnoreligious minority since the Holocaust.

INTERMENT CAMPS

Some of the worst human rights abuses are occurring unchecked in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. Since April 2017, Chinese authorities have detained at least 800,000, and possibly more than 2 million, Uighurs and members of other Muslim minorities in internment camps for indefinite periods of time. This is the U.S. government assessment, backed by our intelligence community and open source reporting. Reports suggest that most of those detained are not being charged with crimes, and their families lack information about their whereabouts, their well-being, and for how long they will be held.

At first, China denied such camps existed. As numerous public reports emerged through the testimony of brave victims and intrepid researchers and journalists, the international community began to speak out about the mass internments. Chinese authorities have recently asserted that these internment camps are “vocational education centers” designed to help young, unemployed people in Xinjiang learn job skills and the Chinese language,

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glossing over the fact that renowned Uighur intellectuals and retired professionals are also detained there. Former detainees who have reached safety have spoken of relentless indoctrination and harsh conditions. They report mandatory classes where detainees are required to recite Communist slogans and sing songs praising the Chinese Communist Party. Failure to quickly learn these lessons leads to beatings and food deprivation. There are reports of the use of stress positions, cold cells, and sleep deprivation in the camps. We have also seen reports of other forms of torture or cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment, including sexual abuse. One common goal in reports from former detainees seems to be to forcing detainees to renounce Islam and embrace the Chinese Communist Party. For example, praying and using common Muslim greetings are forbidden in the camps. There are reports that authorities constantly surveil detainees to ensure that they do not pray, even in their own beds in the middle of the night. Detainees are reportedly forced to eat pork and drink alcohol. Some have reported being forcibly medicated with unknown substances.

China has routinely pressured other countries to return Uighurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and members of other Muslim minority groups to China, many of whom are seeking asylum overseas. In 2015, Thailand returned nearly 100 Uighurs to China and roughly 50 remain in detention in Thailand today. In July 2017, Egyptian authorities deported two dozen Uighurs, who promptly disappeared upon arriving in China. According to civil society groups, most Uighurs involuntarily returned to China face arbitrary imprisonment, disappearance, torture, or summary execution. In some cases, most recently in Malaysia, foreign governments have resisted Chinese pressure – often at the urging of the United States and other like-minded countries – and refused to deport or return Uighur individuals to China, instead considering their asylum claims or allowing them to travel onwards to safe destinations.

China's repression of minority groups does not end in Xinjiang. China's repressive policies toward minority Muslim groups have spread hundreds of miles away to Hui Muslim communities with plans to shut down mosques in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. Tibetans also face continued repression and pervasive surveillance; the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) was the testing ground for many of the techniques now used in Xinjiang, especially the pervasive surveillance based on ethnicity.

FORCED LABOR

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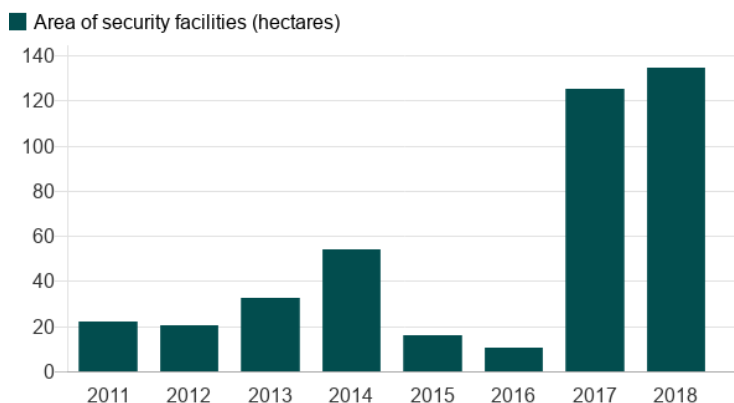
Uighurs inside and outside the camps are exploited for cheap labor, forced to manufacture clothing and other products for sale both at home and abroad. The New York Times revealed in July that some Chinese-made face masks being sold in the United States and other countries were produced in factories that relied on Uighur labor.

Beyond the detention camps, there is now growing evidence that Uighurs are being forced to work in Chinese factories. Given the ubiquity of Chinese manufacturing, that almost certainly means that the exploitation of Uighurs is embedded within global supply chains.

“It is becoming increasingly hard to ignore the fact that goods manufactured in East Turkestan have a high likelihood of being produced with forced labor,” Nury Turkel, chair of the board of the Uyghur Human Rights Project, told Congress in October 2019, using “East Turkestan” to refer to Xinjiang.

The forced labor is happening both within Xinjiang and in other parts of China, according to recent reports. A March 2020 report from the Congressional-Executive Commission on China also found Uighur forced labor taking place within internment camps.

Area of new security facilities built in Xinjiang province, 2011-2018



According to a report from the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), at least 80,000 Uighurs were taken from Xinjiang and transferred to various factories around China between 2017 and 2019, though it's likely that's a lowball estimate. Some Uighurs were taken directly from concentration camps to the factories, though the conditions mirrored those they faced in detention, according to that same study. Uighurs were under

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constant surveillance, forced to undergo Mandarin language instruction and other political teachings in their free time. Most critically, they cannot leave.

The ASPI found that at least 27 suspected factories are using laborers from Xinjiang, which potentially have connections to 83 major global brands. The Xinjiang region, specifically, is a major cotton hub for China, meaning Xinjiang cotton might end up in the final products of many clothing lines.

The Washington Post and ASPI found that the South Korean-owned Qingdao Taekwang Shoes Co. in Laixi, China, a Nike supplier for decades, employs about 700 Uighur workers. Though they could not confirm that the Uighurs were forced to work, eyewitnesses told the Post that the workers weren't allowed to leave freely. Nike has since said it's in contact with suppliers to "assess potential risks" related to the employment of Uighurs. Other companies, like Apple, have said they found no evidence of forced labor but are monitoring their sources.

Another recent investigation in the New York Times found that forced Uighur labor is being used to make personal protective equipment, specifically those disposable surgical face masks that are ubiquitous in the time of Covid-19.

INTERNATIONAL REACTION AND INVOLVEMENT

The Trump administration barred 11 new Chinese companies from purchasing American technology and products without a special license, saying the firms were complicit in human rights violations in China's campaign targeting Muslim minorities in the Xinjiang region.

The list of sanctioned companies includes current and former suppliers to major international brands such as Apple, Ralph Lauren, Google, HP, Tommy Hilfiger, Hugo Boss and Muji, according to a report by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, a think tank established by the Australian government. The group cited the websites of the sanctioned Chinese companies, which mentioned their financial relationships with major American brands.

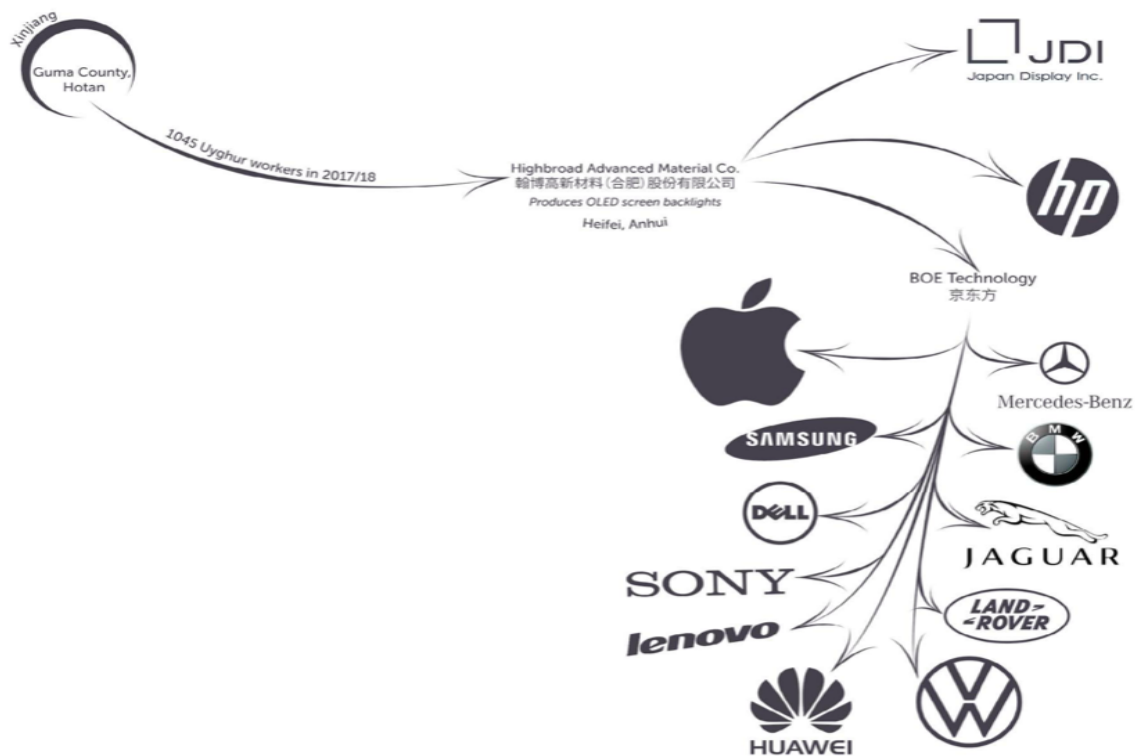
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Figure 19: Highbroad supply chain



The administration's announcement could precipitate more efforts by prominent clothing and technology brands to sever ties with opaque supply chains that touch on Xinjiang, a major source of cotton, textiles, petrochemicals and other goods that feed into Chinese factories.

Nine of the companies that the Trump administration, including Changji Esquel Textile Co. Ltd., Nanchang O-Film Tech and Hetian Taida Apparel Co. Ltd., were added to the so-called entity list for their use of forced labor, the Commerce Department said. Two other companies, Xinjiang Silk Road BGI and Beijing Liuhe BGI, were added for conducting genetic analyses that were used to further the repression of Uighurs and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang, according to the announcement.

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The blacklist only prevents U.S. companies from selling components or technologies to Chinese companies without a license, not from purchasing products. In practice, however, major international brands are unlikely to continue doing business with any firm named on a government list for forced labor or other abuses in Xinjiang.

CHINA'S REACTION

China's new white paper on forced labour in Xinjiang suggests a government uneasy about growing western pressure over abuses of Muslim minorities in the region. It also gives a rare, if oblique, glance into the scale of government attempts to reshape communities in the region, detailing how 10% of the region's population were relocated over the past year, after being dubbed "surplus rural workers".

The paper may not shed direct light on the camp system. Although it describes 1.29 million people a year passing through vocational training, the Chinese language name for these centres is different from the one used in official documents to describe the internment and "re-education" camps.

However, it does make clear the scale on which communities are being reshaped in Xinjiang. It claims that 2.6 million so-called "surplus" rural workers – or about 10% of all residents – were "relocated" in the year to June 2020, with 1.8 million moved the year before that.

A recent "surplus labour" policy in some regions of Xinjiang obliges those aged under 30 to travel outside Xinjiang to work and "eliminate old habits", Grose said, while those aged 30 to 45 relocate within Xinjiang.

Sources/Extracted from:

TIME, A brief history of the Uighurs, [link](#)

The Conversation, Who are the Uyghurs, [link](#)

BBC, The Uighurs and the Chinese state, [link](#)

BBC, China's hidden camps, [link](#)

Foreign policy, China violating human rights, [link](#)

NPR, China suppression of Uighur minorities, [link](#)

Foreign senate, Testimony of Deputy Assistant Secretary Scott Busby, [link](#)

VOX, Concentration camps and forced labor, [link](#)

The NYT, China using Uighur labor, [link](#)

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The NYT, US imposes sanctions on Chinese companies, [link](#)
The guardian, China's white paper on forced labour, [link](#)

Proposed Discussion Questions

- Did you know about the Uighur community prior to reading this toolkit? What was the biggest takeaway from learning more about what's happening?
- In your opinion, why are restrictions on religion growing in the 21st century?
- How can we bridge gaps between various religious communities that are hostile towards each other and/or even physically aggressive?
- Anti-Semitic bias was once mainstream in many cultures, however it has since become more taboo. How can we learn from that shift and fight prejudice and Islamophobia against Muslims to create a climate that is more accepting towards Muslims?
- What are some incorrect assumptions people have made about you or your family based on your religion or affiliation, or lack thereof?
- Have you ever been prejudiced towards a person, solely based on their denomination or lack thereof? What made you change your mind?
- Can you "imagine there's no... religion", as in a famous song? What would be the consequences for world peace? What about other aspects of life, e.g. traditions, morality?
- Do you think that boycotting companies that are linked to the practice of forced labour is a good strategy that can make a real difference? How can consumers play a role in demanding change?

Additional Reading & Follow up

Nursimangul Abdurashid:

- Article, Codastory, [link](#)

Mihrigul Tursun:

- Speech at a US Congressional hearing, [link](#)
- What has happened to me, manga/comic representing testimony, [link](#)

Nury Turkel's work:

- Uyghur Human Rights Project, [link](#)

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- Uyghur American Association, [link](#)
- Profile, United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, [link](#)

James Millward:

- Profile, Georgetown University, [link](#)

Learn more about:

Uyghur:

- Uyghur history, [link](#)
- Xinjiang Video Project, [link](#)
- Uyghur, PBS Advocacy, [link](#)

Religious minorities:

- Protecting the rights, Minority rights.org, [link](#)
- Religious minorities - overview, Science direct, [link](#)

Episode Speaker Biographies

[Main Story Biography] Nursimangul Abdurashid | Uighur Human Rights Activist

Activist, marketing executive, mother of one child. Both parents and two brothers are arbitrarily detained. And she is one of the desperate Uyghurs fighting for freedom for their loved ones.

[Main Story Biography] Mihrigul Tursun | Uighur Human Rights Advocate & Prison Survivor

Former Uyghur detainee in one of the re-education camps in Xinjiang, China. Tursun was taken into custody several times, including at one of a network of political "re-education camps." One of her sons died under mysterious circumstances while she was in the custody of Chinese authorities in 2015. In 2018, Mihrigul Tursun gave testimony at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. She testified that detainees in the camps are beaten, starved, electrocuted, and strip-searched. She then testified before the Congressional-Executive Commission on China about her experience over a series of three internments. In December 2018, Tursun received a Citizen Power Award. She also appears in *What Has Happened to Me – A Testimony of a Uyghur Woman*, a Japanese comic book recounting her story by artist Tomomi Shimizu. It has become a viral hit on the Internet.

[Expert Biography] Nury Turkel | Commissioner, United States Commission on International Religious Freedom; Board Chair, Uyghur Human Rights Project

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Nury Turkel is the first U.S.-educated Uyghur-American lawyer and human rights advocate. He was born in a re-education camp at the height of China's tumultuous Cultural Revolution and spent the first several months of his life in detention with his mother. He came to the United States in 1995 as a student and was granted asylum in 1998. In May 2020, Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) appointed Turkel as a Commissioner to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). In September 2020, Turkel was named one of the TIME 100 Most Influential People in the World. Turkel received an M.A. in International Relations and a J.D. from the American University in Washington, DC. As an attorney, he specializes in regulatory compliance, federal investigation and enforcement, anti-bribery, legislative advocacy, and immigration. In addition to his professional career, Turkel has devoted his time and energy to promoting Uyghur human rights and supporting American and universal democratic norms. Turkel currently serves as the Chairman of the Board for the Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP), which he co-founded in 2003. He also served as the president of the Uyghur American Association, where he led efforts to raise the profile of the Uyghur people in the United States, including organizing and leading the campaign that achieved the March 2005 release of a renowned Uyghur prisoner of conscience, Ms. Rebiya Kadeer. Since 2011, he has successfully represented a substantial number of Uyghur political refugees with their asylum applications in the United States. In addition to his advocacy work in the United States, Turkel has engaged in policy and legislative advocacy in the European Union and the Australian Parliament. He serves as a legal and policy adviser to the past and present presidents of the World Uyghur Congress (WUC), an organization that serves as an umbrella organization for the Uyghur community and advocacy groups promoting universal human rights. Turkel successfully represented Dolkun Isa, WUC's current president, to restore his travel privileges to the United States. He has also assisted Uyghur refugees in the United States, Europe, and Turkey. Turkel has published policy-oriented commentaries and op-eds in publications such as The Wall Street Journal, Time, Newsweek, Foreign Policy, The Independent, The Hill, and The Diplomat. Turkel has spoken at numerous policy forums, academic institutes, and human rights conferences, regarding the mass internment of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in China. He has appeared on major media outlets including CNN, BBC, Fox News, Al Jazeera, Australian ABC, Sky News, France 24, and TRT World. He has testified before Congress, including most recently before the Congressional-Executive Commission on China in October 2019, speaking about Uyghur internment camps, and advocating a legislative response to China's atrocities. Many of his recommendations have been incorporated into U.S. laws and pending bills relating to Uyghurs and China in Congress, including the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020 (Public Law 116-145). Twitter: @nuryturkel, @uscirf

[Expert Biography] James Millward | Professor of Inter-Societal History, Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University

James A. Millward 米華健 is Professor of Inter-societal History at the Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, teaching Chinese, Central Asian and world history. He also teaches in the program of the Máster Oficial en Estudios de Asia Oriental at the University of Granada, Spain. His specialties include Qing empire; the silk road; Eurasian lutes and music in history; and historical and

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contemporary Xinjiang. He follows and comments on current issues regarding Xinjiang, the Uyghurs and other Xinjiang indigenous peoples, and PRC ethnicity policy. Millward has served on the boards of the Association for Asian Studies (China and Inner Asia Council) and the Central Eurasian Studies Society, and was president of the Central Eurasian Studies Society in 2010. He is series editor for the "Silk Roads" book series published by Chicago University Press. His publications include *The Silk Road: A Very Short Introduction* (2013), *Eurasian Crossroads: a history of Xinjiang* (2007), *New Qing Imperial History: The Making of Inner Asian Empire at Qing Chengde* (2004), and *Beyond the Pass: Economy, Ethnicity and Empire in Qing Central Asia* (1998). His most recent album, recorded with the band By & By, is *Songs for this Old Heart*. Jim's articles and op-eds on contemporary China appear in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Guardian*, *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, *The New York Review of Books*, and other media. He has appeared on the PBS Newshour, the Sinica Podcast, *All Things Considered*, *Al Jazeera*, *i24 News* and other broadcast programs and networks.

Twitter: @JimMillward

[Host Biography] HAZAMI BARMADA | Founder & CEO, Humanity Lab Foundation; co-Executive Producer & Host, Finding Humanity Podcast

Hazami is a social entrepreneur, thought leader, and public affairs and social impact expert recognized by Forbes as an "inspirational agent of change." She has consulted for many leading global brands including the United Nations, United Nations Foundation, Aspen Institute, and the Royal Court of the Sultanate of Oman. Among her posts at the United Nations, she served as the Coordinator for the United Nations Secretary General's World Humanitarian Summit, an Advisor to the first-ever United Nations Secretary-General's Youth Envoy, as a member of the United Nations SDG Strategy Hub for the launch of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Hazami has a Masters from Harvard University where she was an Edward S. Mason Fellow in Public Policy and Management. She studied social and public policy at Georgetown University and has a BA in Anthropology and Sociology. Twitter: @hazamibarmada

PODCAST PRODUCTION ORGANIZATIONS & TEAM

Humanity Lab Foundation is a disruptive empathy-driven movement at the intersection of public policy and people power. As a collective of enablers, the Humanity Lab facilitates public engagement and social innovation to drive progress on human development and create an equitable and just world. Through a diverse portfolio of programs and initiatives, the Humanity Lab enhances global development systems by convening, connecting and collaborating with everyday people to solve complex challenges and drive social change. The Humanity Lab aims to: unlock human potential, break down barriers, provoke thought-leadership and knowledge sharing, facilitate partnerships, catalyze action, and democratize access to the power that shapes the world. The Humanity Lab has

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collaborated with a large array of partners including the Office of the President of the United Nations General Assembly, United Nations Office of Partnerships, United Nations, Qualcomm, The Elders, Warner Music, MTV and the Washington Diplomat.

Hueman Group Media ("HGM") is an award-winning podcast company for social change. HGM produces impactful and high-caliber podcasts for leading nonprofit organizations, purpose-driven companies and thought leaders, amplifying conversations around today's most important causes and issues — including gender inequality, climate change, racial injustice, and mental health. HGM podcasts cater to diverse, socially conscious, and deeply curious audiences. With the power of storytelling and expert-driven conversations, HGM activates listeners to take action and make a positive impact in their communities. HGM has worked with notable organizations including UN Women, The Elders, SAP, GoDaddy, CORE Response, and MIT Solve.

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