



UNITED NATIONS  
**HUMAN RIGHTS**  
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER



## **Study Guide**

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## UNHRC

The UNHRC or the United Nations Human Rights Council is an inter-governmental body in the United Nations. It was created by UNGA or the United Nations General Assembly on 15th March 2006. Its main responsibility is to promote and protect human rights all over the world and for looking at the human rights violations and taking out solutions for it. They have the authority to discuss the issues related to human rights that require the spotlight. The conference takes place in the UN office in Geneva. The council consists of 47 member states which are elected by the UN General Assembly.

After one year of setting up, the Council adopted the "**Institution-building package**" to set up its procedures and mechanisms and for defining how it'll function. In those were the **Universal Periodic Review** mechanism which assesses the human rights situations in all the Member States of the HRC. There is an **Advisory Committee** which serves as the Council's "think tank" and it provides it with the expertise and advice that is required for the human rights issues. There is also the **Complaint Procedure** which gives the individuals and organizations a platform to bring forward the human rights violations in front of the Council. The Human Rights Council also works with the **UN Special Procedures** that are made up of special representatives, special rapporteurs, working groups and independent experts that examine, advise, monitor and publicly report on the human rights issues of the countries.

## What did it look into during the pandemic?

The 46th regular session was held in the UN Human Rights Council called the “pandemic of human rights abuses” that had intensified during the coronavirus.

The impact on human rights is the direct reflection of how good the pandemic response was. Human rights of the people are very important and need to be addressed during situations like the pandemic. The responses or actions are shaped accordingly so as to yield better outcomes such as ensuring healthcare for everyone, preserving human dignity etc. This makes it easy for HRC to identify and prioritize the people who are suffering the most and why and what can be done for them. The Council's aim is to emerge out of this crisis with more equitable and sustainable societies along with development and peace.

The ongoing catastrophe, especially wars, put human rights and other international legal protections under huge risk. The COVID-19 crisis has aggravated the vulnerability of the least protected communities in a society by bringing into light the deep economic and social inequalities and inadequate health and social protection systems. Every person from women to men, youth to the elderly, refugees to the migrants, people with disabilities, the poor, LGBTQIA+ people etc are a few among them and are being affected differently. It is the council's duty to ensure that everyone is protected and included in the response to the crisis. Human rights law may recognize national emergencies over certain human rights and severity of COVID-19 has reached a level where restrictions are justified on public health grounds. But there is nothing that ties the hands of States in taking effective decisions for the response to the pandemic. Their aim is threefold: to strengthen the effectiveness of the response to the immediate global

health threat; mitigate the broader impact of the crisis on people's lives; and avoid creating new or exacerbating existing problems.

In the recent Call to Action for Human Rights to put human rights at the heart of UN actions, including in times of crisis, the Secretary-General underlined that:

our shared human condition and values must be a source of unity, not division. We must give people hope and a vision of what the future can hold. The human rights system helps us to meet the challenges, opportunities and needs of the 21st century; to reconstruct relations between people and leaders; and to achieve the global stability, solidarity, pluralism and inclusion on which we all depend. It points to the ways in which we can transform hope into concrete action with real impact on people's lives. It must never be a pretext for power or politics; it is above both.

The main aim of the paper is to translate the Call into action for assisting with the response to the pandemic.

Three rights are at the frontline in the current pandemic:

- Right to life and duty to protect
- Right to health and access to healthcare
- The central challenge to freedom of movement

## **Agenda : Reviewing the Human Rights Violations against Uyghur Community in Xinjiang Province**

**Introduction :** In recent times the former president of the United States Of America signed into law the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020. The law basically talks about how the Chinese Officials are accountable for the detention and persecution of Uyghurs. The Uyghurs also alternatively spelled as Uighurs are a Turkic, muslim ethnic group originating from the

general area of Central and East Asia. They are considered as a native of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of the Northwest Region.

Many sources do speak about how badly the Uyghurs have been subjected to exploitative working and abusive living conditions that may constitute arbitrary detention, human trafficking and enslavement by the use of forced labour. These workers are employed in low skilled labour intensive industries.

## **Role of UNHRC**

UNHRC being an inter-governmental body of the United Nations stands for the protection of human rights. Minor ethnic groups from a human standpoint are also human beings who have as many rights as any human being. They should never be exploited on the basis of ethnicity. The Forced Labour Convention, 1930 ( No.29) prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory Labour.

At present the UNHRC considers this as an important grave problem as millions of people have been arbitrarily detained in Xinjiang and that there is widespread surveillance that disproportionately targets and restricts the fundamental freedom of Uyghurs and their culture.

## **At Present Situation**

Ignoring the Chinese government's attempt to commit genocide against the Uyghurs makes the Uyghurs feel that their lives are very cheap in front of the eye of the international Community.

Interestingly, many of the products enjoyed by Western countries are made by interned Uyghurs in China. According to several reports, Uyghur forced labor contributes significantly to the world economy -- particularly

solar-panel manufacturing and cotton-growing industries. In a liberal international order, there can be no room for forced labor.

The US Senate has taken serious steps forward on this issue by passing the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, which establishes broad import bans on products from the Uyghur region. The US House of Representatives, which passed an earlier version of the bill in 2020, must now move quickly to pass this bill, so that President Joe Biden can sign it into law.

Both Donald Trump's and Joe Biden's administrations have labeled China's actions toward the Uyghurs as a genocide, and the Canadian, British, Dutch and Lithuanian Parliaments have concurred. State signatories to the United Nations Genocide Convention are obliged to take action to halt genocide when it occurs and punish the perpetrators. Yet so much more remains to be done to address the continuing horrors of Xinjiang.

Based on, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide published new report "To Make Us Slowly Disappear": The Chinese Government's Assault on the Uyghurs, it give us a hint that somewhere there has been a slow decline of the Uyghurs and it is initiated by the Chinese Authorities. Chinese authorities have harmed the Uyghur community not only physically but mentally too. They have forced the sterilization of Uyghur women, forced the placement of IUDs, they have detained the members of the Uyghur community, they have physically abused the detainees, they have forced the separation of the Uyghur families, including children, whether by transfer or detention and they have also forced labor held in detention as well as those recently released or otherwise not detained. Further, the report indicates the use of rape and sexual violence as yet another way of causing serious harm upon the members of the community. They has also tried to portray the Uyghurs as a security threat to the Chinese nation, restricted Uyghur travel, they have imprisoned the Uyghurs for years for "inciting ethnic hatred and discrimination" for something as minor as talking to others about Islamic



law, used biometric technologies to create databases of Uyghur biometrics without their consent, destroyed their mosques, and transferred the “orphaned” Uyghur children, whose parents they have detained, into state institutions.

## **Reading material and Questions/ topics**

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What are Human Rights?**

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Pages/WhatareHumanRights.aspx>

**Letter to the 41st HRC on Human Rights Violations in Xinjiang  
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### **OHCHR Article on Human Rights Situation in Xinjiang**

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**Cross-Regional Joint statement on Human Rights Situation in Xinjiang at 47th Session of UN Human Rights Council 3rd Committee UN General Assembly, October 21, 2021**

<https://onu.delegfrance.org/we-call-on-china-to-allow-immediate-meaningful-and-unfettered-access-to>

**Joint statement on Human Rights Situation in Xinjiang at 47th Session of UN Human Rights Council, June 22, 2021**

[https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international\\_relations\\_relations\\_internationales/un-onu/statements-declarations/2021-06-22-statement-declaration.aspx?lang=eng](https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations_relations_internationales/un-onu/statements-declarations/2021-06-22-statement-declaration.aspx?lang=eng)

**Statement by German Ambassador Christoph Heusgen on behalf of 39 Countries in the Third Committee General Debate, October 6, 2020**

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