



FORUM: Special Conference on “Democracy, Good Governance and Civil Society”

TOPIC: The situation in China’s Xinjiang re-education camps

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POSITION: Deputy President

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates,

It is an honor for me to serve as the Deputy President of the Special Conference on “Democracy, Good Governance and Civil Society” at the 4th session of the Anavryta Model Lyceum MUN. My name is Ermina Garini, I am 16 years old and currently attending 11th grade at Pierce-The American College of Greece. So far, I have participated in 7 conferences, and this will be my first time in a student officer position.

I would like to congratulate you all on your upcoming participation in the 4th AMLMUN and encourage you to create lasting memories and contribute to a fruitful debate. It’s my pleasure to welcome you all and I am looking forward to collaborating with you. I hope that this conference is going to be an amazing experience for everyone, both first timers and experienced ones.

Through this study guide I aim to help you gain a holistic approach to the situation in China’s Xinjiang re-education camps. It will provide you with all the necessary knowledge to build a strong foundation upon the matter. I advise you to prepare thoroughly for this conference and conduct your own research on your country’s policies, too, so that you make the most of this valuable experience. Should you have any questions regarding this topic or need any clarification, feel free to contact me via email at:

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TOPIC INTRODUCTION

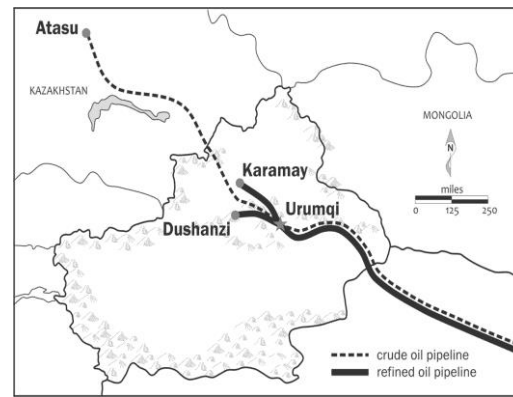
It goes without saying that the circumstances in China’s Xinjiang re-education camps have developed global concern as far as the detainees are concerned. Xinjiang is a province in north-west China. More than 40 different ethnic groups call it home, and it borders many Chinese provinces as well as nations like Russia and Kazakhstan. The two most prominent ethnic minorities are the Han Chinese and the Uyghurs. The Uyghurs, who possess the Turkish language, are committed to the Muslim religion. On the other hand the Han Chinese, the world’s largest ethnic group, do not limit themselves to one religion. Xinjiang is viewed as the energy powerhouse of China and

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the second largest solar, hydropower, and wind energy source. It is rich in oil, hydrocarbons, gas, minerals and home to three Chinese airbases. Apart from these, many of China's oil and gas pipelines either start or pass through this region. Taking these into consideration, it is well understood that Xinjiang plays a crucial geostrategic role in China's ambitions.



¹ Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region



² Xinjiang's vital pipelines

Having in mind Xinjiang's value on China's economy, citing the reduction of terrorism and the re-education of extremist groups, the Chinese government created the "re-education camps" in the Xinjiang province, which detain mainly Uyghurs. However, despite the government's statements, these camps appear like prisons with slightly better conditions, rather than re-education centers. Although information about the camps' conditions is limited, it is known through interviews that incidents of torture and other forms of cruel and inhuman treatment are common. Various researches reveal that detainees were forced to express their loyalty to the communist party and renounce Islam, as well as sing praises for communism and learn mandarin. The use of cameras and microphones, controlling their moves, sexual abuse and disrupted families are also reported.

Nevertheless, the Chinese government insists that these camps are "vocational education and training centers" aiming to teach Mandarin, Chinese laws, vocational skills and protect citizens from the influence of extremist beliefs, in order to prevent violence. Hence, it appears that the Chinese government aims to erase the Uyghur culture, religion and identity, as well as force loyalty to the Communist party. The creation of these camps could also arise not only from China's fear of losing its control over a crucial area of its economy but also from discrimination against the Uighurs. According to a former detainee, even the newspapers in the region, in their job

¹ Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Xinjiang>. Accessed 8 August 2025.

² ChinaFile, <https://www.chinafile.com/reporting-opinion/features/beijings-long-struggle-control-xinjiangs-mineral-wealth>. Accessed 8 August 2025.

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advertising section cite “No Uyghurs” a clear case of discrimination. Therefore it is evident that the stance towards this ethnic group was already inappropriate.

Yet the government’s remarks do not seem to convince the global community. If everything is truly as ideal as presented, then why are people forcibly detained in these camps and why are incidents like disinformation and activists’ harassment brought to light? What is certain is the fact that we still have limited knowledge as far as these camps are concerned.



³ The evolution of the camps



⁴ Exterior view of a detention camp in Xinjiang

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Assimilation

“The process of becoming a part, or making someone become a part, of a group, society, country, etc.”⁵

Nationalism

“A great or too great love for your own country.”⁶

Islamophobia

³ BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-22278037>. Accessed 8 August 2025.

⁴ Council on Foreign Relations, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/china-xinjiang-uyghurs-muslims-repression-genocide-human-rights#chapter-title-0-3>. Accessed 8 August 2025.

⁵ Assimilation: Cambridge Dictionary, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/assimilation>. Accessed 8 July 2025

⁶ Nationalism: Cambridge Dictionary, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/nationalism>. Accessed 8 July 2025



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“Unreasonable dislike or fear of, and prejudice against, Muslims or Islam.”⁷

Extremism

“The fact of someone having beliefs that most people think are unreasonable and unacceptable.”⁸

Communism

“The belief in a society without different social classes in which the methods of production are owned and controlled by all its members, and everyone works as much as they can and receives what they need, or a social and political system based on this belief.”⁹

Propaganda

“Information, ideas, opinions, or images, often only giving one part of an argument, that are broadcast, published, or in some other way spread with the intention of influencing people’s opinions.”¹⁰

Terrorism

“Violent action or threats designed to cause fear among ordinary people, in order to achieve political aims.”¹¹

Surveillance

“The careful watching of a person or place, especially by the police or army, because of a crime that has happened or is expected.”¹²

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Strategic importance

Comprehending this issue is inextricably linked to Xinjiang’s strategic importance. More specifically, there are three factors that structure the unique geographic location of Xinjiang. Among these are Xinjiang’s mineral and fossil resources. More precisely, approximately 38 % of the total coal sources and around

⁷ Islamophobia: Cambridge Dictionary, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/islamophobia#google_vignette. Accessed 8 July 2025

⁸ Extremism: Cambridge Dictionary, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/extremism>. Accessed 8 July 2025

⁹ Communism: Cambridge Dictionary, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/communism>. Accessed 8 July 2025

¹⁰ Propaganda: Cambridge Dictionary, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/propaganda>. Accessed 9 July 2025

¹¹ Terrorism: Cambridge Dictionary, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/terrorism>. Accessed 8 July 2025

¹² Surveillance: Cambridge Dictionary, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/surveillance>. Accessed 8 July 2025



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25% of the national oil and natural gas are spotted in Xinjiang. The region's arid climate and the Taklamakan Desert, as well as the Soviet countries and Muslim states that used to live there, play a significant role, too. A pipeline, known as the Kazakhstan China oil pipeline happens to be the major reason China wishes to control this province. It is precisely 2.798 km long and costs 3 billion. It connects the Kazakh shore of the Caspian Sea with the XUAR, from where it starts. Therefore the possession of this pipeline and in general this area is of the utmost importance for China. The official name given to this project by Beijing is "the first pipeline of the new silk road", as it covers 15% of the country's domestic oil needs. Furthermore Xinjiang connects China to Central Asia and the Middle East and protects the nation's geopolitical core as it acts as a northwestern barrier. Nevertheless Xinjiang is a sensitive area for China as it's neighboring Afghanistan and Pakistan, which host many terrorist groups. Hence, these circumstances have led to many conflicts among the two ethnic groups, the Han Chinese and the Uighurs. Nowadays incidents such as the one on 5th July of 2009, when around 200 people were killed in a massive conflict between the two ethnicities, have been brought to light. If something is certain, it is the fact that the Xinjiang region is very meaningful for China.

Development of re-education camps

It is acknowledged that since 2017 more than a million Muslims have experienced the harsh conditions of a re-education camp. On what grounds, though, did the Chinese government proceed to the creation of these facilities? The main reason seems to be the government's vision to suppress the Uighurs. So, China's fear of losing its control over this precious region has led to the development of these re-education camps, also known as internment, detention or concentration camps. As the experts claim, reeducation efforts were firstly noticed in 2014 and expanded in 2017, when the construction of these places began. A research conducted in 2021 showed that since then China has built nearly 400 camps. More specifically, many of them have the size of 140 soccer fields. In 2019 Xinjiang's governor stated that the detainees were "graduates" at the time and therefore many camps were closed. Nonetheless, it was found through satellite images that a vast number of them still existed. Nowadays these camps have increased to more than 1,000 and some of them have evolved into high-security detention centers or prisons.



¹³ Aerial view of a city in Xinjiang

Chinese government's position

During the peak period of these camps the Chinese government denied their existence. However, through satellite research, which was conducted by numerous researchers, their statement was proved to be invalid. Therefore, taking this into consideration, they started claiming that these camps were “vocational education and training centers” aiming to teach the mandarin language, laws of China , vocational skills and prevent any extremist thoughts and violent actions. As a matter of fact it is expressed that with the aim of promoting this propaganda, the government has not only encouraged disinformation but also proceeded to activists’ harassment . More specifically, the Chinese authorities, in order to limit the information about these camps, which was spread due to the release of a report made by the UN, claimed that foreign governments and organizations “spread numerous rumors and lies”. In spite of all these accusations, the government still declares that these facilities benefit the detainees, as they widen their job opportunities and prevent poverty, strengthening the workforce of the country.

Conditions inside the camps

As stated by many researchers many of the detainees were kept in these camps without a genuine reason. More specifically it is observed that various of these people had never committed any crime and unfortunately didn’t have legal support. Some of the arrest causes, though, seem to be travelling to or communication with people from countries like Turkey or Afghanistan, the attendance of mosques service and texts that contain verses from the Koran. Thus, their only crime seems to be their ethnicity. Inside these camps incidents of torture and cruel behavior were revealed. It is also known that detainees were forced to express their commitment to the communist party, learn Mandarin and renounce their own religion something, which derives from the Islamophobia that dominates the Chinese government. The

¹³ Sol-o.ru, <https://sol-o.ru/provinciya-sinczyan-kitay/>. Accessed 8 August 2025.

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monitoring of all their actions by cameras and microphones, tortures, sleep deprivation before the interrogations, sexual harassment and suicides are also common. Apart from these forced labor in factories that were near the camps and sterilizations were revealed. A typical example could be the experience of an Uyghur woman, who came to China together with her kids. As she mentioned in an interview she gave, after her arrival in China she was separated into a room and her children were taken away from her. After hours of interrogation the Chinese authorities handcuffed her, put a dark sack over her head, took her cellphone and passport and sent her to a re-education camp. During her detention in these camps she was deprived of food, forcibly given drugs that made her lose her appetite, took her to an underground cell with no windows, as she was suspected to be a spy and had 7 days to memorize the camp rules and 14 days to learn by heart the lines of a communist book. In case they didn't manage to remember these lines, they were denied food and beaten up. Adding on to that, they were obligated to take pills, some of which stopped women's period or even led to death due to excessive bleeding. As far as food is concerned, despite the fact that they were supposed to eat 3 meals every day, there were days, when they only ate a steam bun or even no food. Furthermore a very characteristic form of torture was the electric chair, where people were electrocuted. What is certain though is that these are only some of the examples of the harsh conditions that were prevailed in these camps. (full interview: <https://hongkongfp.com/2018/12/08/video-full-ex-xinjiang-detainee-mihrigul-tursuns-full-testimony-us-congressional-hearing/>). Having all these in mind it is understood that these camps have been a traumatic experience for many of our fellow human beings and an unforgettable memory, which has stigmatized these people.



¹⁴ Protestors standing up for Uyghur rights

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

¹⁴ 38 Degrees, <https://home.38degrees.org.uk/2021/05/13/xinjiang-campaign-victory/>. Accessed 8 August 2025.



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United Kingdom (The UK)

In 2019 the United Kingdom encouraged China to permit access to observers representing the United Nations organization, offering valuable data regarding the conditions inside the camps, where more than a million Uighurs have been detained. The UK has also been one of the main supporters of the joint statement, which was made by 22 nations and aimed to finish all cruel actions occurring in these facilities. More precisely, the UK has been one of the countries that signed the particular statement, becoming one of the numerous countries involved in the situation of Xinjiang's re-education camps.

Türkiye

Having offered a safe place to approximately 50,000 Uighurs, Turkey strongly condemns the actions of the Chinese government in the Xinjiang province, claiming that these camps should be considered a "shame for humanity". More specifically, the foreign ministry spokesman Hami Aksoy accused China in a speech for torture and other cruel activities. Having these in mind, Turkey encourages the worldwide community, as well as the United Nations to implement the appropriate measures to eliminate the existence of these camps, contributing to the confrontation of the problem.

Human Rights Watch (HRW)

The Human Rights Watch (HRW) is considered to be one of the major organizations involved in the specific problem that preoccupies the global society. As it is acknowledged the HRW accuses China for refusing suppression, while committing crimes against Xinjiang's ethnic minorities. Apart from this it highlights through a series of speeches the urgent need to take action, while claiming that China's refusal to accept its actions is expected. Nonetheless despite the several efforts made by the Human Rights Watch the Chinese government keeps facing these accusations as misinformation.

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Taking into consideration the various reports that stated that many Uighurs were missing, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) expressed the seriousness of the situation, petitioning access to the XUAR for the verification of the statements made by China. With the intention of tackling this issue the OHCHR proceeded to the writing of the OHCHR assessment of human rights concerns in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, which evaluates the overall situation. Being aware of the current situation in Xinjiang, the specific organization has demanded the implementation of measures aiming to bring this operation to an end, becoming one of the organizations that are struggling to overcome this problem.

World Uyghur Congress (WUC)



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WUC also known as the World Uyghur Congress is an establishment that operates at an international level. Founded on 16 April 2004 in Germany it has contributed to the struggle aiming to address the situation in Xinjiang's re-education camps. Through a series of actions it focuses on promoting a conflict-free, nonviolent and democratic way of living for the particular ethnic minority. The significant impact in the Uyghurs' daily life is seen through its participation in many campaigns and collaboration with institutions such as the European Parliament, the EU Commission, as well as many UN treaty bodies and NGOs.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	EVENT
1884	Founding year of the Xinjiang province
5 th July 2009	200 people were killed in a massive conflict between the Uighurs and the Han Chinese in Xinjiang
14 th December 2009	completion of the construction of the "first pipeline of the silk road"
19 th December 2013	China's president Xi Jinping announces a new "strategic plan" for the Xinjiang region
1 st May 2014	2014 was the year that the re-education campaign began.
29 th May 2015	In 2015 the world bank approved the funding that was available for the construction of these camps.
10 th October 2018	Legalization of the re-education camps by Xinjiang's government.
19 th April 2021	The Human Rights Watch publishes the "Break their lineage, break their roots" document aiming the announcement of China's crimes against the Uighurs
16 th November 2021	The United States of America accuses China for a genocide against Xinjiang's Uighur minority.



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6 th October 2022	The resolution whose aim was the protection of the Uighurs' human rights was rejected.
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RELEVANT UN TREATIES, CONVENTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

Adopted on November 16, 1986 by the UN General Assembly the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights treaty aims to prevent political and civil rights violations. More specifically, it emphasizes on the fundamental human rights, which include religious liberty, torture freedom, diseases treatment, expression right, protection from unfair detention and significantly more. The impact of the ICCPR is recognized at a national level. It is considered to be the foundation of the creation of a human rights draft. Nevertheless not all nations have ratified it (it has been ratified by 174 states). Unfortunately, one of these nations is China, which explains the situation in Xinjiang's re-education camps.

Convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (CAT)

The convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment was adopted on December 10, 1984 by the General Assembly. As mentioned by the UN it aims to pursue the complete elimination of behavior characterized by actions of torture and other cruelties. More precisely, the convention consists of 33 articles, which bring up the right to complain to the authorities, the definition and prevention of torture, the criminalization of torture by all nations and far more. As far as China is concerned, in spite of its participation in the CAT, it still struggles to align Chinese laws with the content of the convention.

Draft resolution at the UN Human Rights Council on the Human rights situation in Xinjiang

The particular resolution was proposed in October 2022. Despite the persistent effort of many nations the motion to debate on the situation in Xinjiang's re-education camps was refused, as there were 17 votes in favor, 19 votes against due to economic and political motives and 11 abstentions. Having this in mind, China's foreign affairs spokesperson faced the vote results with a sense of victory, accusing many UN states for misinformation and misuse of human rights. Sadly, regardless of the effort that was made this resolution did not pass and therefore nothing altered. More specifically, its aim was the protection of the Uighurs' human rights in Xinjiang. Pointing out the conditions in these camps, it accused China for a "crime against humanity", highlighting the urgent need to take action.



¹⁵ Demonstrators showing support for Uyghur freedom.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

U.S. Sanctions Under the Global Magnitsky Act-July 2020

On July 1, 2020 the U.S. department of the treasury's office of foreign assets control, on occasion of the situation in Xinjiang's re-education camps, implemented a series of sanctions to a Chinese government entity, as well as many officials. More specifically, some of these officials are Chen Quanguo and Zhu Hailun that have been accused for arbitrary detentions and human rights violations against Xinjiang's ethnic minorities. The particular action is deeply connected to the executive order 13818 according to which they have the right to block the possessions of anyone involved in crimes regarding human rights. Moreover the United States encouraged all companies to avoid selling products that are a result of forced labor, emphasizing the dangers. As a result of the sanctions applied to China by the United States any interactions or transactions with the Chinese officials that were punished were prohibited.

Uyghur forced labor prevention act

The Uyghur forced labor prevention act (UFLPA) was signed in December 2021 by the government of the United States. Its major purpose was to put an end to forced labor in the Xinjiang province. More precisely, based on the U.S. 19 U.S.C. §1307 any products that come from this type of labor are not allowed to be imported in the United States. As a result numerous companies have set new measures to guarantee the observance of the laws and the United States has denied the entry of thousands

¹⁵ iStockphoto, <https://www.istockphoto.com/photo/uyghur-human-rights-activists-protest-gm483701026-71199763>. Accessed 8 August 2025.



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of products, including electronics, footwear, pharmaceutical, agricultural products and a lot more.

Xinjiang Data project

The Xinjiang Data Project, launched by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), focuses on the human rights situation in the Xinjiang province. More precisely, it emphasizes China's mass internment camps, surveillance, forced labor and supply chains. The research is conducted through satellite imagery, documents of the Chinese government, statistics, studies and reports. As it is acknowledged it was the ASPI that released a study, which claimed that instead of releasing the Uighurs the Chinese authorities had expanded the camps. More accurately the institute spotted 380 re-education camps across the region, revealing crucial data to the global community and organizations that are making an effort to solve the issue of the situation in Xinjiang's reeducation camps.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The creation of a database

The situation in Xinjiang's re-education camps could be solved through the creation of a database accessible to many organizations, institutions and individuals aiming to contribute to the establishment of better life conditions for the Uighurs. Having in mind the danger to which those expressing their opinion, as well as personal experiences are exposed, an option to anonymously upload their content will be available. More precisely, through this database the global community will be able to publish satellite research, first-hand knowledge from people's experience as detainees, videos, photos and anything else that could offer information about the conditions in these camps. As a result the implementation of this measure will prevent reporters' harassment and the fear that accompanies those who have the courage to share their own journey in these camps. In order to avoid any content that doesn't align to the aim of this website there will be an evaluation stage before any publications are made.

Support for victims

The United Nations could offer asylum to those who are in danger of experiencing the conditions inside these camps or have already been detainees. More specifically, the harsh conditions inside these facilities lead to incidents that include post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, social stigma and trauma. Adding on to that, not only are detainees affected but also those, who are possible victims of this campaign. Therefore it is very crucial that these facilities offer to these people free of charge psychological support from psychiatrists and psychologists, as well as job opportunities. The UN could also offer protection to kids whose parents are detained and have no parental care. They could also provide education inside the



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asylum, as a vast number of those who have been detained in the past feel stigmatized and as a result exposing themselves in public creates a sense of insecurity.

Digital sanctuary

As a means to confront the situation in Xinjiang's re-education camps could be the creation of a digital "sanctuary". More specifically, this "sanctuary" could be a digital platform in which the Uyghur community could store information regarding the cultural traits of their society. These data could include songs, art, language, food, clothing and religion. Hence the risk of a cultural "genocide" would be significantly lower as the Uyghur's' cultural heritage would be safeguarded. For the purpose of avoiding any site restrictions by the Chinese government, all the content could be printed and kept in a safe place, so that we have all the documents in a tangible form, too. The particular website could be promoted by UN campaigns, as well as the World Uyghur Congress, so that everyone is aware of its existence and its importance. Very vital though would be the implementation of an evaluation procedure, which would ensure the publication of content that aligns with the app's purpose.

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