

JHSSMUN

Backgrounder Guide



SOCHUM

UYGHUR MUSLIMS DISENFRANCHISEMENT

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Director's Letter

Dear Delegates,

My name is Oscar Chen, and I am honored to serve as the Director of the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM) of JHSSMUN 2023. The first of its kind, JHSSMUN was envisioned to become a revolutionary, one-of-a-kind Model UN experience, designed with the developing and experienced delegate in mind. Alongside my fellow secretariat members, we wish to formally welcome you to the SOCHUM committee.

The topic of focus for the SOCHUM committee will be the displacement of Uyghur Muslims in China. With constant reports of human rights violations and concerning humanitarian issues, this crisis has transcended boundaries, and has become an issue concerning not only the Islamic community, but also demands attention from a multinational council.

The dias strongly encourages delegates to utilize this backgrounder as a guidebook for research into the committee topic, as well as the development of innovative resolutions. The dias fervently awaits for the opportunity to moderate your spectacular debates.

Sincerely,
Oscar Chen
Director of SOCHUM

For any inquiries, contact us at:
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Committee Overview

The Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Affairs (SOCHUM) committee is one of the six main committees of the United Nations General Assembly. The committee is responsible for addressing a wide range of social, humanitarian, and cultural issues that affect people around the world. Some of the main issues that SOCHUM addresses include human rights, poverty, hunger, health, and education. The committee also deals with issues related to the rights of children, refugees, and migrants.

For example, SOCHUM may collaborate with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)¹ to monitor and report on human rights abuses, and with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to support the development and implementation of policies and programs that promote the rights and well-being of minority communities.

In addition, SOCHUM may work with the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to promote cultural heritage and identity, and with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to address the needs of children and young people from minority communities.

As a committee of the UN General Assembly, SOCHUM is an important venue for addressing the human rights and humanitarian concerns of minority communities, including the Uyghur Muslims.

¹ Publications." OHCHR. Accessed December 29, 2022. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/publications>.

Topic Overview

The Uyghur Muslim crisis refers to the ongoing human rights crisis in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, where the Chinese government has been accused of committing widespread human rights abuses against the Uyghur Muslim minority population.

The Chinese government has been criticized for implementing policies that restrict the cultural and religious practices of the Uyghurs, such as restrictions on fasting during Ramadan and prohibitions on religious education. Additionally, there have been reports of mass detentions of Uyghurs in "re-education" camps², where they are reportedly subjected to political indoctrination, torture, and other forms of abuse. These "re-education" camps are eerily similar to the concentration camps used by Germany on the Jewish population during the Holocaust.

The international community has expressed concern about the situation in Xinjiang, with several countries and international organizations condemning the Chinese government's actions. Some governments and organizations have called for an independent investigation into the human rights situation in Xinjiang, while others have imposed economic sanctions or other forms of diplomatic pressure in response to the crisis.² However, the Chinese government has defended its actions as necessary for counter-terrorism and anti-separatism efforts, but the international community has widely criticized these actions.

² Regencia, Ted. "What You Should Know about China's Minority Uighurs." Uighur News | Al Jazeera. Al Jazeera, July 14, 2021. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/7/8/uighurs-timeline>.

Historical Analysis



The Uyghur Muslim crisis is a complex issue that has its roots in a long history of political and cultural tensions between the Chinese government and the Uyghur Muslim minority in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

Historically, the Uyghurs have been a distinct ethnic and religious group in Xinjiang, with their own language and cultural traditions. However, over the past century, the Chinese government has implemented a series of policies aimed at assimilating the Uyghurs into mainstream Chinese culture, often through force and repression. This has included restrictions on religious and cultural practices, efforts to suppress the Uyghur language and promote the use of Mandarin, and strict controls on Uyghur political and social organizations.

In recent years, the Chinese government's policies towards the Uyghurs have become increasingly harsh. Since around 2016, there have been widespread reports of mass detentions of Uyghurs in "re-education" camps, where they are subjected to political indoctrination, torture, and other forms of abuse. There also reports of forced labor, mass surveillance and forced sterilization of Uyghur women. The Chinese government has defended these policies as necessary for counter-terrorism and anti-separatism efforts, but the international community has widely criticized them as human rights violations.³

The Uyghur Muslim crisis has also been seen in the context of the Chinese government's overall approach to ethnic and religious minorities in the country. The Chinese government has implemented similar policies of assimilation and repression towards other ethnic and religious minorities, such as Tibetans and Falun Gong practitioners.³

This leads to a complex situation where the Chinese government's actions are criticized by the international community and it's hard for them to find a solution for the crisis that respects the rights of the Uyghur people, at the same time the Chinese government is facing the growing threat of extremism, which is one of the reasons they point out as the main justification for the actions they take. Internationally, the disenfranchisement of the Uyghur Muslims has been a notable topic of debate. However, many of China's political allies during the last UN meeting denied to discuss the crisis resulting in extensive public outrage.⁴

³ Michael Dillon | Published in History Today Volume 70 Issue 1 January 2020. "A Uighurs' History of China." History Today. Accessed December 29, 2022. <https://www.historytoday.com/archive/behind-times/uighurs%E2%80%99-history-china>.

⁴ Sturmer, Amy, and Maria Eza. "SOCHUMUyghurCrisis," n.d. "Who Are the Uyghurs and Why Is China Being Accused of Genocide?" BBC News. BBC, May 24, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-22278037>

Current Situation

The Uyghur Muslim crisis is a current situation that has received widespread attention from the international community. The Uyghur are an ethnic minority group primarily residing in the Xinjiang region of western China. In recent years, the Chinese government has been accused of engaging in human rights abuses against the Uyghur community, including mass detentions, forced labor, and cultural assimilation efforts.⁵

The Chinese government initially portrayed these measures as counterterrorism and stability maintenance efforts aimed at preventing extremism and violence in the region. However, reports of human rights abuses and violations of international law have led to widespread condemnation from the international community. In 2019, the United Nations reported that over one million Uyghur and other ethnic minorities were being held in “reeducation camps” in Xinjiang.⁵

The situation has caused international tensions, with some countries and organizations calling for an end to the human rights abuses and the release of detained individuals. On the other hand, China has defended its actions, stating that they are necessary to maintain stability and protect the country from extremism.⁴

The Uyghur Muslim crisis is an ongoing situation that has far-reaching implications for international human rights and security.⁴ The international community must continue to monitor the situation and advocate for the protection of the rights and freedoms of all individuals, including the Uyghur community.

⁵ “China Responsible for ‘Serious Human Rights Violations’ in Xinjiang Province: Un Human Rights Report | UN News.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed December 29, 2022. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/08/1125932>.

Bloc Positions

Countering Extremism (China & China's Economic Partners):

China denied the accusations of a genocide taking place within the country. They label these "re-education" camps as necessary measures for the safety of their country. Countries which are reliant on China's economy supports these measures and encourages no further measures be taken. Other countries, such as Russia and Pakistan, have defended China's actions in the region, claiming that they are the ideal solution for countering extremism.

Western Bloc (North America & European Union):

Many western countries have come forward and voice their concerns regarding the measures currently in place within China. Some countries, such as the United States, have imposed sanctions on Chinese officials and entities accused of human rights abuses in Xinjiang. This means that Chinese officials do not have the ability to enter the United States territory whatsoever. The European Union and Canada have also imposed sanctions on Chinese officials, and have expressed concern about the human rights situation in Xinjiang. Moreover, the European Union has raised their voice on the matter in international forums and remain adamant on ending the abuse.

Cautionary Bloc (Neutral Countries):

These countries remain cautionary on favoring one side but rather would prefer to remain absent from the crisis. This is shown through countries such as Brazil, Malaysia, & Mexico who abstained from voting on discussing the issue during the Human Rights Council. However, this bloc is vital since whichever side they favor will gain majority through voting on resolutions. Their independent views are essential to dealing with the Uyghur Muslim Disenfranchisement.

Potential Solutions

Diplomatic Pressure:

This is one of the main approaches that countries and international organizations have used to address the crisis. Some countries, such as the United States, have imposed sanctions on Chinese officials and entities accused of human rights abuses in Xinjiang. Other countries, such as Canada and the European Union, have also imposed sanctions and have expressed concern about the human rights situation in Xinjiang. The United Nations (UN) and other international organizations have also criticized China's actions in the region. The pressure on China can be increased by more countries raising the voice, and the international body such as SOCHUM and UN Human Rights Council.

Monitoring and Investigations:

UN human rights experts and international human rights organizations have called for greater access to Xinjiang for independent monitors to investigate the human rights situation on the ground. Some experts also recommend that the international community establish an independent commission of inquiry to investigate the human rights abuses in Xinjiang.

Cultural and Educational Exchange:

Some experts recommend increased cultural and educational exchange between China and other countries as a way to promote understanding and respect for different cultures. This could include more exchange programs for students, scholars, and artists, and more opportunities for cultural institutions, such as museums and libraries, to collaborate with their counterparts in China.

Economic pressure:

Some experts recommend using economic pressure to encourage China to change its policies in Xinjiang. This could include boycotts of products made with forced labor or the imposition of tariffs on Chinese goods produced in Xinjiang.

Supporting the Uyghur Community:

Supporting Uyghur refugees and diaspora communities, to provide humanitarian assistance, education and job opportunities for them. Also, the international community can provide support for Uyghur civil society organizations, media outlets and initiatives that promote human rights and cultural preservation.

**It is important to note that resolving the Uyghur Muslim crisis will likely require a combination of different approaches and sustained international pressure on the Chinese government rather than just one of these solutions.*



A protest in China regarding the Uyghur Muslim genocide

Guiding Questions

- What is the current state of human rights in Xinjiang, specifically regarding the treatment of Uyghur Muslims?
- What actions has the international community, including the United Nations, taken in response to the crisis?
- How has the crisis affected the economic and political relations between China and other countries?
- How has the crisis affected the global supply chains and business operations, specifically the products made by forced labor?
- What are the consequences of human rights violations in Xinjiang on global and regional stability and security?
- How the international community can support the Uyghur community in their host countries, what kind of education, job opportunities and humanitarian assistance should be provided for them?
- What measures can be taken to ensure that the human rights of Uyghur Muslims are protected, and the actions of the Chinese government are held accountable?
- What are the possible future outcomes of the crisis and how they will affect the Uyghur community and the relations with China?
- Are there any international legal frameworks that can be invoked to hold Chinese officials and entities accountable for human rights abuses in Xinjiang?

Extra Resources

- <https://xinjiang.sppga.ubc.ca/timelines/historical-overview/>
- <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/china-xinjiang-uyghurs-muslims-repression-genocide-human-rights>
- <https://uca.edu/politicalscience/dadm-project/asiapacific-region/chinauighurs-1949-present/>
- <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/07/how-documentation-critical-exposing-chinas-abuses-uyghurs>
- <https://thedefiantmovement.org/politics/2021/2/25/the-lack-of-coverage-on-the-uyghur-crisis>
- <https://www.arncta.com/teacher-resources/the-uyghur-crisis-and-islam-in-east-asia>
- <https://religiousfreedominstitute.org/hard-evidence-of-chinas-genocide/>
- <https://www.efsas.org/publications/study-papers/ethnic-cleansing-of-uyghur-identity-by-china/>
- <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/06/china-draconian-repression-of-muslims-in-xinjiang-amounts-to-crimes-against-humanity/>

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