

China's internment camps violate rights

Reports raise concerns over Chinese treatment of Uighurs

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UNDISCLOSED, Location. - China has been accused of multiple human rights violations after reports emerged that thousands of Uighur Muslims were imprisoned in concentration camps in the western province of Xinjiang.

In late 2017, the Human Rights Watch published a report alleging that China was unlawfully imprisoning Uighurs and other minority Muslims in concentration camps. A 2018 investigation by the BBC found numerous compounds were built in Xinjiang, with satellite imagery showing major growth of the structures over recent years. Locals identified these areas as "re-education camps."

Documents leaked to the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) in 2019 disclose the involuntary nature of the confinement and the camps' inner workings. The papers reveal that "students" are only allowed to leave if affected by "illness and other special circumstances."

Even then personnel are to "accompany, monitor, and control them." Camp personnel are also instructed to "prevent escapes." Security is tight with guard patrols, heavy surveillance, and watch towers.

Inmates are assessed by their "ideological transformation, study and training, and compliance with discipline" and are forced to learn and speak Mandarin. The documents outline the requirements needed for "graduation" and show that inmates are sent to work in factories once they leave the camps. Coverage by the New York Times suggests that these workers are often pressured into staying in their new jobs.

According to a report by the Associated Press, the Chinese government has also taken steps to cut Uighur and other minority birth rates. The AP investigation found that women were being forced on birth control, to use IUDs and even to have abortions.

Statistics analyzed by AP found that birth rates in Uighur areas had dropped more than 60% since 2015. The report also suggests that women who have too many children are punished by the government or threatened with internment in camps.

China has denied the existence of concentration camps and questioned the legitimacy of the documents obtained by ICIJ. The country's foreign ministry has also decried the AP report as "fake news." Instead, Beijing has referred to the camps as "vocational skill education training centers," insisting that they prevent religious extremism and terrorism. Chinese officials have

also claimed that attendance in the camps are voluntary and that residents are given full freedoms.

Uighurs, a majority Muslim ethnic group, have had a long history in Xinjiang. With a Turkic language, the Uighurs share many similarities with central Asian cultures. Historically, Uighurs in Xinjiang have resisted Chinese rule. Previous attacks by Uighur extremists have increased tensions with the Chinese government, leading to increased scrutiny towards the ethnic group.

Calls from the United Nations and various nations for China to cease the usage of camps have been met with denial.

As of 2018, the US State Department estimates that authorities in China “have detained at least 800,000, and possibly more than two million” Muslims and Uighurs.