



'UYGHUR TRIBUNAL' OPENS WITH TESTIMONY OF ALLEGED RAPE, TORTURE



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CHINA'S TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION LEAVES UYGHURS NO SPACE TO RUN

Beijing's peaceful rise has been paralleled by the increasing repression of Uyghurs on China's behalf around the world.

Over the last quarter-century, as China's "peaceful rise" carried the country to new economic and geopolitical heights, Beijing was engaged in an ever-expanding campaign of transnational repression. From neighboring Pakistan and the states of Central Asia, to Saudi Arabia and Egypt, to Thailand, Cambodia, and Myanmar, China has seen through the detention and, at times, deportation of Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities fleeing Beijing's grasp.

A new report and dataset put together by researchers Bradley Jardine, Edward Lemon, and Natalie Hall under a joint initiative by the Oxus Society for Central Asian Affairs and the Uyghur Human Rights Project is an effort to comprehensively analyze the patterns of China's transnational repression.

"Between 1997 and December 2016, China was involved in the detention or deportation

back to China of over 851 Uyghurs across 23 countries," the report, titled "No Space Left to Run: China's Transnational Repression of Uyghurs," states. From 1997 to March 2021, the researchers identified 28 countries around the world which have been "complicit in China's harassment and intimidation of Uyghurs."

The dataset contains 1,151 cases of Uyghurs being detained in countries outside China and 395 cases of deportation, extradition, or rendition back to China. The researchers note that the dataset is just the "tip of the iceberg," as it relies on publicly reported cases of repression.

China's efforts have evolved over time, with the report identifying three distinct phases: from 1991 to 2007, 2008 to 2013, and 2014 to March 2021.



The early phase (1991-2007), coming in the wake of the Soviet Union’s collapse, includes cases concentrated largely in neighboring Central and South Asia. Central Asia was home to a large Uyghur diaspora and the peoples of the region share ethnic, linguistic and cultural ties. In the 1990s, as communities in the newly independent states formed organizations dedicated to Uyghur culture and rights, Beijing grew increasingly concerned of possible cross-border influence and separatism. According to the report, as early as 1994, “China began using economic statecraft ... Chinese officials toured the region to promote trade deals in exchange for cooperation in silencing the Uyghur diaspora.”

In Afghanistan and Pakistan in this early period, China courted the Taliban for its assistance too. In 1998, Chinese Ambassador to

Pakistan Lu Shulin met with Taliban leader Mullah Omar, eliciting assurances that the group had no interest in interfering in China’s “domestic issues and affairs.” Although the Taliban would later rebuff U.S. requests to hand over al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden, in 2000 the Taliban turned over 13 Uyghurs it had previously granted “political asylum” to China.

In 1997, as Pakistan grew closer to its “all-weather” ally China, Islamabad deported 14 Uyghurs who had been studying at Pakistani madrassas. After they were driven across the border, they were executed. According to the report’s dataset, this is the first instance of extradition of Uyghurs to China at Beijing’s request.



In that early phase, the researchers identified at least 89 Uyghurs from nine countries detained or deported to China. In the second phase (2008-2013), Beijing's efforts and reach expanded to 130 detained or returned from 15 countries.

The 2009 violence in Urumqi and ensuing crackdown triggered an exodus of Uyghurs, many trying to reach Turkey — then perceived as a safe haven — via Pakistan and Southeast Asia. Many ended up stuck in Southeast Asia, with Chinese economic relations again a convenient tool for leverage in countries like Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar. Thailand is actually the largest source identified in the report, given a group of 424 Uyghurs who were detained in 2014. Thai authorities sent around 170 women and children on to Turkey but extradited 109 men to China and continue to detain the remainder. “The fact that Thailand has been the largest source of China’s transnational repression in terms of numbers is as much a factor of Thailand’s poor record regarding refugees as it is of Chinese influence in the country,” the researchers noted.

The third phase, from 2014 to the March 2021, marked an even sharper rise: a total of 1,327 detained or deported to China from 20 countries. As Chinese pressure and repression in Xinjiang reached new heights, its global efforts to pursue Uyghurs intensified

too, abetted by the introduction of algorithmic surveillance, which aided authorities in determining if an individual might be an extremist based on foreign ties and other “suspicious” features. This latest phase saw the participation of Muslim-majority countries across the Middle East and North Africa. Ironically, ties with or travel to a country like Saudi Arabia is deemed by

Beijing as “suspicious,” yet Saudi authorities have had few qualms about backing China’s Xinjiang policies and in the past four years have deported at least six Uyghurs to China who were visiting Saudi Arabia on pilgrimage or living there legally.

The researchers stress in the report’s conclusion that transnational repression is but a part of the wider patterns of “global authoritarianism” in which “autocratic regimes like China actively cooperate with one another and repurpose institutions to protect themselves from accountability for human rights abuses.” This, in part, explains the paradoxical support of Muslim-majority authoritarian states for the repression of Muslims in China. Economics also forms an important tether. Of the top 10 countries where China used transnational repression against the Uyghurs, the report notes that China is the largest creditor in four (Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Cambodia and Myanmar). The Belt and Road Initiative, in both its political and economic aspects, undergirds China’s increasing reach.

By Catherine Putz



MORE THAN 40 COUNTRIES URGE CHINA TO LET UN HUMAN RIGHTS CHIEF INTO XINJIANG AS CONCERNS FOR UYGHURS MOUNT

More than 40 countries urged China on Tuesday to allow the UN human rights chief immediate access to Xinjiang to look into reports that more than a million people have been unlawfully detained there, some subjected to torture or forced labour.

The joint statement on China was read out by Canadian Ambassador Leslie Norton on behalf of countries including Australia, Britain, France, Germany, Japan and the United States to the UN Human Rights Council.

Beijing denies all allegations of abuse of Uyghurs and describes the camps as vocational training facilities to combat religious extremism.

“Credible reports indicate that over a million people have been arbitrarily detained in Xinjiang and that there is widespread surveillance disproportionately targeting Uyghurs and members of other minorities and restrictions on fundamental freedoms and Uyghur culture,” the joint statement said.

“We urge China to allow immediate, meaningful and unfettered access to Xinjiang for independent observers, including the High Commissioner,” it added, referring to Michelle Bachelet.

Ms Bachelet told the council on Monday that she hoped to agree on terms for a visit this year to China, including Xinjiang, to exam-



ine reports of serious violations against Muslim Uyghurs.

Her office has been negotiating access since September 2018.

Chinese diplomats dismiss statement as ‘politically driven’

Jiang Yingfeng, a senior diplomat at China’s mission to the United Nations in Geneva, rejected the statement on Tuesday as interference driven by “political motives”.

“We welcome the visit by the High Commissioner to China, to Xinjiang,” he said.

“This visit is for promoting exchanges and cooperation rather than an investigation based on so-called presumption of guilt,” he told the council without giving a timeline.

The Canadian-led statement cited reports of torture, forced sterilisation, sexual violence and forced separation of children from their parents.

It decried a law imposed a year ago in Hong Kong against what China deems secession and terrorism.

The first trials are due to begin this week of people arrested under the legislation.

“We continue to be deeply concerned about the deterioration of fundamental freedoms in Hong Kong under the National Security Law and about the human rights situation in Tibet,” it said.

Mr Jiang said, “Since the national security law, Hong Kong has witnessed change from chaos to rule of law.”

Beijing with the first move

Before Canada read out the joint statement on Tuesday, China and several other countries read out their own.

China and its allies called for an investigation into the discovery of the remains of indigenous children in Canada at the site of a former boarding school, prompting an angry response from Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

The remains of 215 children were found at the Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia that closed in 1978, the Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc Nation said on May 28.

“We call for a thorough and impartial investigation into all cases where crimes were committed against the indigenous people, especially children, so as to bring those responsible to justice, and offer full remedy to victims,” Jiang Duan, a senior official at China’s mission to the United Nations in Geneva, told the Human Rights Council.

Mr Trudeau, condemning what he called “the systemic abuse and human rights violations” in Xinjiang, said a Canadian truth and reconciliation commission had worked from 2008 to 2015 to address the mistreatment of the indigenous population.

“Where is China’s truth and reconciliation commission? Where is their truth? Where is the openness that Canada has always shown and the responsibility that Canada has taken for the terrible mistakes of the past?” Mr Trudeau asked.

Mr Jiang read the statement out on behalf of countries such as Russia, Belarus, Iran, North Korea, Syria and Venezuela, all of which have been criticised by Western nations for human rights violations.

By ABC/Reuters



‘UYGHUR TRIBUNAL’ OPENS WITH TESTIMONY OF ALLEGED RAPE, TORTURE

Dozens are giving their accounts to a people’s tribunal in London, which China has dismissed as a ‘clumsy public opinion show’.

A London-based people’s tribunal is investigating whether China’s alleged persecution of its Uyghur minority amounts to genocide, with witness testimony detailing mass torture, rape and a range of other abuses.

The “Uyghur Tribunal” has no state backing and any judgement would not be binding on any government, but it has drawn a furious response from Beijing, which dismissed the hearings as a “machine producing lies”.

The first hearings take place over four days, from Friday to Monday, and are expected to draw dozens of witnesses. A second session is expected in September.

The nine United Kingdom-based jurors of the tribunal, including lawyers and human rights experts, intend to publish a report in December on whether China is guilty of genocide.

The first witness to testify on Friday, Qelbinur Sidik – an ethnic Uzbek teacher from Xin-

jiang’s capital Urumqi, said she was ordered by the Chinese Communist Party bosses to take Mandarin-language classes in two fetid and crowded “re-education” camps, one male and one female, for Uyghurs.

The so-called students were made to wear shackles during hours-long classes, she told the tribunal.

“Guards in the camp did not treat the prisoners as human beings. They were treated less than dogs,” Sidik said through an interpreter. “They enjoyed watching them being humiliated and their suffering was for them their joy.”

Female prisoners were allegedly abused when they were taken for interrogation.

“They were not only tortured but also raped, sometimes gang-raped,” Sidik said. “The things that I have witnessed and experienced, I can’t forget.”



Sidik said she was also subjected to forced sterilisation.

Organisers hope the process of publicly laying out the evidence of alleged state-orchestrated repression against the Uyghurs will compel international action against the country's authorities.

According to the United Nations, at least one million Uyghurs, a largely Muslim ethnic group, have been detained in the internment camps in China's northwest Xinjiang province, which borders eight countries including Afghanistan, Pakistan and India.

'I want my son to be freed'

The tribunal is chaired by prominent human rights lawyer Geoffrey Nice, who led the prosecution of ex-Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic and has worked on several

cases brought before the International Criminal Court (ICC).

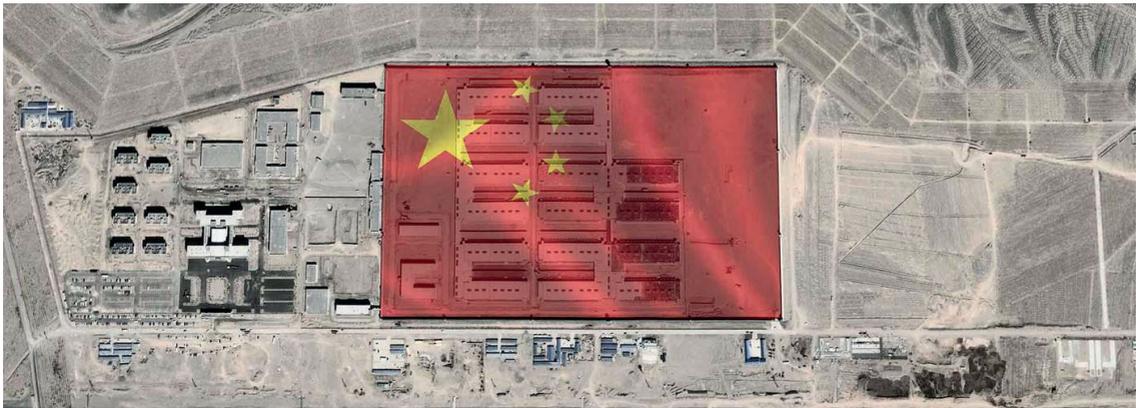
It was set up at the request of the World Uyghur Congress, an international organisation of exiled Uyghurs.

The tribunal's organisers said Chinese authorities had ignored requests to participate in the hearings.

But counsel for the tribunal said the United States and Australia had offered to provide relevant material, to add to thousands of pages of documentary evidence already compiled.

Critics, including the UK and the US, say Uyghurs have been subjected to human rights violations, including arbitrary detention, forced labour, torture, forced sterilisation and family separation.

Before giving testimony to the tribunal via video link, three Uyghurs who fled from China to Turkey described their experiences.



One, named Rozi, said she was forced into an abortion when six and a half months pregnant. Her youngest son was detained in 2015, when he was just 13, and she hopes the tribunal's work will help lead to his freedom.

"I want my son to be freed as soon as possible," she said. "I want to see him be set free."

Another, a former doctor, spoke of draconian birth control policies.

And a third, a former detainee, alleged he was "tortured day and night" by Chinese soldiers while imprisoned in the remote border region.

Beijing denounces hearings

China denies the allegations of abuse and claims the camps are "re-education" centres.

Officials insist that mass "education and training" is necessary in Xinjiang to fight

what they call the "three evil forces of extremism, separatism and terrorism", and boost economic development there.

In March, the tribunal was among four UK entities and nine individuals sanctioned by Beijing for raising concerns about the treatment of the Uyghurs.

China has also publicly condemned the tribunal.

"It is not even a real tribunal or special court, but only a special machine producing lies," foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said last week. "It was founded by people with ulterior motives and carries no weight or authority. It is just a clumsy public opinion show under the guise of law."





BELGIAN LAWMAKERS PUT FORWARD RESOLUTION WARNING ‘RISK OF GENOCIDE’ OF CHINA’S UYGHURS

Belgian lawmakers on Tuesday put forward a resolution warning of a “serious risk of genocide” against the Uyghur Muslim minority in China’s Xinjiang region, adding to Western pressure on Beijing.

Samuel Cogolati, the MP who authored the resolution, said the motion was approved by the parliament’s foreign relations committee and will be confirmed by a plenary session on July 1.

Cogolati, who has himself already been hit by sanctions from Beijing, initially pushed for a tougher statement blaming China for committing the “crime of genocide”.

But the resolution was toned down last week after a debate inside Belgium’s majority coalition of liberals, socialists and greens.

Cogolati still welcomed Tuesday’s approval as “a historic vote, that was unimaginable a month ago”.

Those behind the text said it would make Belgium’s the sixth democratic parliament after Canada, the Netherlands, Britain, Lithuania, and the Czech Republic to denounce “crimes against humanity” against the Uyghurs.

Earlier, G7 leaders on Sunday called on China in a joint statement after their meeting “to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, especially in relation to Xinjiang”.

A report from rights group Amnesty International last week accused Beijing of “systematic state-organised mass imprisonment, torture and persecution amounting to crimes against humanity” in the northwestern region.

China denies allegations that it is committing crimes on a vast scale by forcing up to one million Uyghurs and people from other ethnic-Turkic minorities into internment camps in the region of Xinjiang.

By WION Web Team



UN RIGHTS BOSS SIGNALS SHE MAY MOVE ON XINJIANG WITHOUT CHINA NOD

- **Bachelet has sought access to Xinjiang for nearly 3 years**
- **Says her office is assessing alleged abuses while negotiating**
- **Has previously initiated probes without a country's invitation**
- **"It is time for her to act," says Ken Roth, Human Rights Watch**

GENEVA, June 25 (Reuters) - The United Nations human rights chief should document her own findings on the plight of Uyghurs in Xinjiang even without China's blessing for a visit, activists and Western diplomats say, amid signs that her patience may be running out.



Michelle Bachelet, U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, said on Monday that she hoped to agree on terms for a long-sought visit to China this year to look into allegations of mass detention, torture and forced labour.

Beijing denies all allegations of abuse of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims, describing camps in its far west as vocational training facilities to combat religious extremism.

Canada led a record 45 countries, including the United States, in urging China on Tuesday to allow Bachelet immediate access to Xinjiang for a first-hand assessment.



China rejected the statement as interference driven by “political motives”. It said it welcomed a visit by Bachelet, but that it should be focused on “promoting exchanges and cooperation rather than an investigation based on so-called presumption of guilt”.

Bachelet later dropped a hint to the Human Rights Council that she has other options, while still pursuing negotiations with China on a visit that have dragged on since September 2018.

“In the meantime, the office continues to deepen its analysis and assessment of the alleged patterns of human rights violations in Xinjiang,” she said on Tuesday.

Bachelet has the authority to collect testimonies of abuses remotely, without a mandate from the council or invitation from the country concerned. She and a predecessor initiated such probes on killings by security forces in Venezuela, the disputed Kashmir territory and southeastern Turkey.

“There is no formal U.N. assessment of what is happening in Xinjiang and we need that given

Beijing’s denial,” Kenneth Roth, head of Human Rights Watch, told reporters last week.

Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International this year documented what they said could constitute crimes against humanity being committed in Xinjiang.

Sarah Brooks, China expert at the International Service for Human Rights, said: “All that remains is for High Commissioner Bachelet to step up - China’s cooperation must not be misinterpreted as a precondition to doing her job.”

By Stephanie Nebehay



BEIJING 2022 OLYMPICS: ‘IF GENOCIDE ISN’T OUR RED LINE FOR A FULL BOYCOTT, THEN I REALLY DON’T KNOW WHAT IS’

Allegations of human rights abuses by China against the Uyghur Muslim minority have galvanized a global movement, which is now pushing for a full boycott of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics.

From Lausanne to London, Brisbane to Buenos Aires, this week saw a day of protests against Beijing’s hosting of the 2022 Winter Olympics, in what was called a Global Day of Action, using the hashtag #NoBeijing2022.

The protests popped up in more than 50 cities around the world. Representatives from Tibet, the Uyghur minority, Hong Kong, China, Taiwan and Southern Mongolia and allies sought to apply pressure on the International Olympic Committee (IOC) at a time when momentum is growing for a full boycott the 2022 Beijing Winter Games, due to start in February.

Earlier this month, Amnesty International described the Xinjiang region of China as a “dystopian hellscape” for hundreds of thousands of Muslims — predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities — some of whom are subjected to mass imprisonment, torture, surveillance and exploitation.

“The Chinese authorities have created a dystopian hellscape on a staggering scale in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region,” said Agnes Callamard, secretary general of Amnesty International.

“It should shock the conscience of humanity that massive numbers of people have been subjected to brainwashing, torture and other degrading treatment in internment camps, while millions more live in fear amid a vast surveillance apparatus.”

The message of the Global Day of Action — held on June 23 to coincide with International Olympic Day — was clear: China must



not be allowed to sports wash the “genocide” of the Uyghur people and the escalating repression of others.

“Sports washing” refers to the widely held view that some regimes seek to use the hosting of major international sporting events to improve their reputations.

Is IOC monitoring human rights?

“If genocide isn’t our red line for a full boycott, then I really don’t know what is,” Zumretay Arkin told DW as she prepared to coordinate the Global Day of Action.

Arkin is a human rights advocate at the Munich-based World Uyghur Congress (WUC). A Uyghur herself, Arkin has co-led the campaign to boycott the Games and has met with the IOC twice to gain assurances that they are keeping China to its word about upholding human rights – but the plan wasn’t always to boycott.

“When we first met in October last year, we wanted some concrete assurances that China would uphold basic standards on human rights, including the use of forced labor to manufacture merchandise for the Olympics,” she said. “We wanted to test them on how seriously they were taking human rights issues.”

Arkin and her team wanted a concrete com-

mitment in writing that Beijing was keeping its word on the promises it had made to the IOC about human rights, and that the IOC would ensure the safety of athletes and the media during the Games.

“I asked the IOC how they are planning to conduct due diligence during the Olympics about human rights. What is the strategy? Do you have one? If so, can you share it with us so that there’s transparency and we can monitor what you’re doing commercially,” said Arkin.

“We went into the meeting very optimistic, but left very defeated. The IOC’s answers were vague and broad and didn’t answer the questions. They agreed to share the assurances with us in writing, but after many follow-ups, they never did.”

Escalation to a full boycott

It was after this first meeting that the idea of a Beijing 2022 boycott gathered momentum. The WUC had moved from a position of diplomacy to a full strike, as have other campaign groups. It was a decision that wasn’t taken lightly, with campaigners aware that boycotts aren’t easy to pull off, are deeply unpopular with athletes, and in the case of China, have the potential for serious political ramifications.

“We started with a diplomatic boycott because we were aware of the sensitivities around boycotts and the fact that they penalize the athletes,” said Arkin. “That was before our second meeting with the IOC.”





The IOC continued to ignore the request for written assurances but did invite them for a second meeting in March. This meeting — attended by Arkin and two other colleagues — opened with the question: “Are you going to report this to the media again?” It was a question that surprised Arkin.

“Right off the bat they tried to give us a lesson in Olympic boycotts and the history of how they’ve failed. It was very condescending. If we call for a boycott, that’s our problem,” she said.

A political balancing act

Arkin and her team have found support for a diplomatic boycott — whereby heads of states do not attend the Games — in the shape of US Senator Mitt Romney and Nancy Pelosi, the speaker of the US House of Representatives.

“We cannot proceed as if nothing is wrong about the Olympics going to China,” Pelosi told Congress’ Human Rights Commission last month, even if the US has stopped short of backing a full boycott.

There was a further boost to the chances of a diplomatic boycott earlier this month when

the US Senate passed a bipartisan bill aimed at tackling Chinese foreign policy and economic influence.

However, Arkin and her colleagues are angling towards something bigger. She believes that the only way to hold Beijing responsible is by isolating China from the international community — and that includes not sending athletes to Beijing.

“I think we have a good chance of achieving a diplomatic boycott,” she said. “The severity of the abuses happening across China have been widely reported but we still would like to see a full boycott. It’s a popular idea.”

IOC takes responsibility ‘very seriously’

In a statement to DW, the IOC defended its position claiming that it takes its responsibilities seriously but is unable to affect the laws of individual countries.

“At all times, the IOC recognises and upholds human rights enshrined in both the Fundamental Principles of the Olympic Charter and in its Code of Ethics,” the statement read. “We are responsible for ensuring the respect of the Olympic Charter with regard to the Olympic Games and take this responsibility very seriously.

“At the same time, the IOC has neither the mandate nor the capability to change the laws or the political system of a sovereign country. This must rightfully remain the legitimate role of governments and respective inter-governmental organisations.”

But as the IOC continues to be judged on its actions rather than its words, the momentum behind a full boycott of Beijing 2022 could be at a tipping point.



CHINESE BIRTH-CONTROL POLICY COULD CUT MILLIONS OF UYGHUR BIRTHS, REPORT FINDS

Chinese birth-control policies could reduce the ethnic minority population in southern Xinjiang by up to a third over the next 20 years, according to new analysis by a German researcher.

The analysis concluded that regional policies could cut between 2.6 and 4.5 million minority births in that time.

China has been accused by some Western nations of genocide in Xinjiang, partly through forced birth-control measures.

China denies the allegations, saying birth-rate declines have other causes.

The new study, by researcher Adrian Zenz, is the first such peer-reviewed academic paper on the long-term population impact of China's crackdown on the Uyghurs and other minority groups in Xinjiang.

It found that under China's birth-control pol-

icies in the region, the population of ethnic minorities in southern Xinjiang would reach somewhere between 8.6 and 10.5 million by 2040, compared to 13.1 million projected by Chinese researchers before Beijing's crack-down.

"This [research and analysis] really shows the intent behind the Chinese government's long-term plan for the Uyghur population," Mr Zenz told the Reuters news agency, which first reported the study.

In his report, Mr Zenz writes that by 2019 Xinjiang authorities "planned to subject at least 80% of women of childbearing age in the rural southern four minority prefectures

to intrusive birth prevention surgeries, referring to IUDs or sterilisations”.

Sharp decline

Experts believe that China has detained at least a million Uyghurs and other Muslims in Xinjiang, and the government faces accusations of attempting to reduce and assimilate the minority Muslim population there.

Reports also say authorities have intentionally moved people from the mainstream Han Chinese population into parts of Xinjiang previously dominated by ethnic minorities, and forcibly transferred Uyghurs out.

According to Mr Zenz's research, China's birth-control policies could increase the Han population in southern Xinjiang - where the Uyghur population is concentrated - from its current level of 8.4% to about 25% by 2040.

According to official Chinese statistics, there was a 48.7% decline in birth rates in ethnic minority areas of Xinjiang between 2017 and 2019.

China announced last week that it would allow couples to have up to three children, after census data showed a steep decline in national birth rates. But leaked documents and testimony from Xinjiang suggest an opposite

policy is being pursued there, with women detained or otherwise punished for exceeding birth-control quotas.

A previous report by Mr Zenz based on regional data, policy documents and testimony alleged that pregnant Uyghur women in Xinjiang were being threatened with internment for refusing to abort pregnancies, while others were involuntarily fitted with intra-uterine devices or coerced into sterilisation surgery.

China denies making any attempt to reduce the Uyghur population specifically, arguing that the decline in minority birth rates in Xinjiang is due to the implementation of general birth quotas in the region as well as increases in income and better access to family planning.

“The so-called ‘genocide’ in Xinjiang is pure nonsense,” China’s Foreign Ministry told Reuters in a statement.

“It is a manifestation of the ulterior motives of anti-China forces in the United States and the West and the manifestation of those who suffer from Sinophobia.”

Mr Zenz is a researcher at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, a Washington DC-based “anti-communist” organisation which describes itself as dedicated to “pursuing the freedom of those still living under totalitarian regimes”.

Reuters said it had shared his new research and methodology with more than a dozen experts in population analysis, birth prevention policies and international human rights law, who told the news agency the analysis and conclusions were sound.

Some of the experts cautioned that demographic projections over a period of decades can be affected by unforeseen factors.





CAIR CALLS ON HILTON HOTELS TO DROP XINJIANG PROJECT

The Council on American-Islamic Relations is urging Hilton hotels to drop plans to build a hotel on a site where a mosque once stood.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) is urging Hilton Worldwide Holdings to drop plans to build a hotel in China's Xinjiang region on the site where Chinese officials bulldozed and desecrated a mosque.

"The notion that a corporation would do business in the same location of an ongoing genocide is unbelievable," CAIR's National Deputy Director Edward Ahmed Mitchell told Al Jazeera.

The United Nations and the administration of United States President Joe Biden have accused China of committing genocide against Muslim Uyghurs.

A recent Amnesty International report called the situation on the ground in Xinjiang a "dystopian hellscape", detailing how minority groups have been forced to abandon their religious traditions, language and culture.

"We say 'never again' but we never actually mean it. Hilton can either build a hotel and be complicit in genocide, or it can cancel the hotel and help stop a genocide," Mitchell said.

China is planning to build a new commercial centre that includes a Hilton hotel on a plot of land where a mosque once stood, British newspaper The Telegraph reported on Sunday.

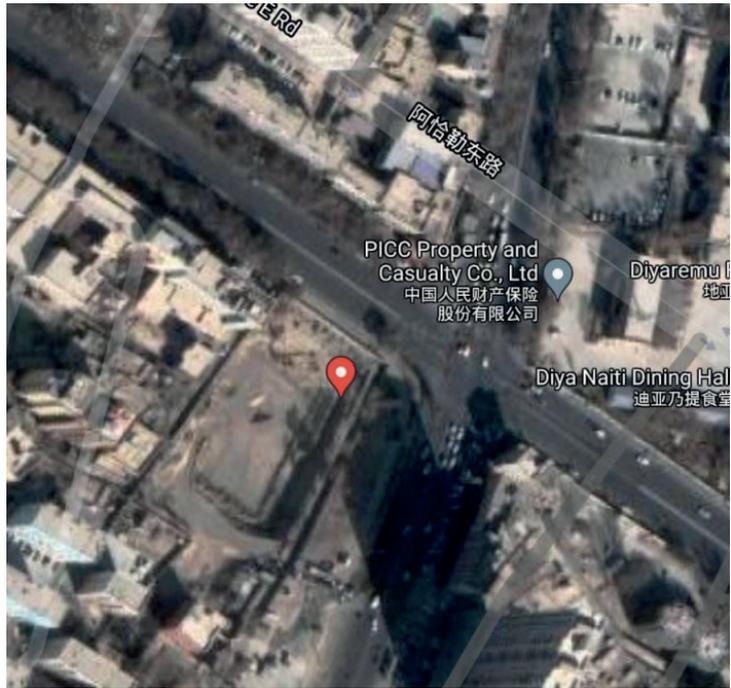
The Virginia-based Hilton Worldwide Holdings did not immediately respond to Al Jazeera's request for comment.

In its report entitled "Like We Were Enemies in a War': China's Mass Internment, Torture, and Persecution of Muslims in Xinjiang", Amnesty International detailed the human rights abuses committed against Uyghurs.



Amnesty found that hundreds of thousands of Muslim men and women have been sent to prisons or internment camps where they have been subjected to “physical and psychological torture” and that China has subjected Muslims to systemised mass surveillance to make them perhaps “the most closely surveilled population in the world”.

Muslim ethnic groups are forced to abandon their religious traditions, cultural practices and local languages, according to Amnesty International, which also shared the testimony of 50 former camp detainees.



“The Chinese authorities have created a dystopian hellscape on a staggering scale in Xinjiang. Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other Muslim minorities face crimes against humanity and other serious human rights violations,” Agnes Callamard, Amnesty International’s secretary general, said in a statement.

China has denied any mistreatment of its Muslim minority.

CAIR, which is the US’s largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organisation, has also lauded Biden’s tougher stance on human rights abuses in China’s Xinjiang region.

In April, Biden’s secretary of state, Antony Blinken, condemned China for acts of genocide against Muslim Uyghurs and its human rights violations. He also urged US corporations to refuse to do business in the region.

“Hilton is based in the United States but

seems to be ignoring the US government’s formal recognition of China committing genocide against Uyghur Muslims and other Turkic minorities,” Robert S McCaw, CAIR’s director of government affairs, told Al Jazeera.

The Biden administration also raised the issue of human rights in China during last week’s Group of Seven (G7) talks with other world leaders. Mitchell said that businesses also have an important role to play in taking a stand.

“China is such a superpower – and no one is going to go to war over human rights,” Mitchell said. “The only people who can do something about this are the United States and major corporations. Corporations have a major role to play in stopping this genocide.”

By Radmilla Suleymanova



CHINA DENOUNCES G7 AFTER STATEMENT ON XINJIANG AND HONG KONG

China has accused the G7 of “political manipulation” after it criticised Beijing over a range of issues.

In a joint statement at the end of a three-day summit, leaders of the G7 countries urged China to “respect human rights and fundamental freedoms”.

Issues highlighted included abuses against the Uyghur Muslim minority group and the crackdown on Hong Kong pro-democracy activists.

China’s embassy in the UK accused the G7 of “baseless accusations”.

“Stop slandering China, stop interfering in China’s internal affairs, and stop harming Chi-

na’s interests,” a spokesman said on Monday.

The statement by the G7 - the world’s seven largest so-called advanced economies - included pledges on a number of issues, such as ending the coronavirus pandemic and steps to tackle climate change, as well as references to China.

The group, made up of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the US, called on China to respect human rights in Xinji-





ang, a north-western region that is home to the Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities.

Experts generally agree that China has detained as many as a million Uyghurs and other Muslims and imprisoned hundreds of thousands more in its crackdown in Xinjiang, which began in 2017. There have been widespread reports of physical and psychological torture inside prisons and detention camps in the region. China denies the allegations.

The G7 statement also called for rights and freedoms to be respected in Hong Kong, where a new security law passed by China last year has made it easier to punish protesters. The leaders said Hong Kong should retain a “high degree of autonomy”, as established under agreements when it was handed back to China in 1997.

The statement underscored the “importance of peace and stability” across the Taiwan Strait - a heavily-policed waterway that separates China and Taiwan. China sees democratic Taiwan as a breakaway province, but Taiwan sees itself as a sovereign state.

It also demanded a new investigation in China into the origins of Covid-19.

US President Joe Biden said he was “satisfied” with the statement’s language on China.

But the Chinese embassy in the UK opposed the mentions of Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Taiwan, which it said distorted the facts and exposed the “sinister intentions of a few countries such as the United States”.

A stronger message on China is expected to be issued by leaders of the Nato military alliance at a meeting on Monday.

“We know that China does not share our values... we need to respond together as an alliance,” Nato Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said as he arrived at the one-day summit in Brussels.

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said the country would feature in Nato’s communique “in a more robust way than we’ve ever seen before”.



A months-long analysis of more than 3,000 of the videos by ProPublica and The New York Times found evidence of an influence campaign orchestrated by the Chinese government.

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Recently, the owner of a small store in western China came across some remarks by Mike Pompeo, the former U.S. secretary of state. What he heard made him angry.

A worker in a textile company had the same reaction. So did a retiree in her 80s. And a taxi driver.

Pompeo had routinely accused China of committing human rights abuses in the Xinjiang region, and these four people made videos to express their outrage. They did so in oddly similar ways.

“Pompeo said that we Uyghurs are locked up and have no freedom,” the store owner said.

“There’s nothing like that at all in our Xinjiang,” said the taxi driver.

“We are very free,” the retiree said.

“We are very free now,” the store owner said.

“We are very, very free here,” the taxi driver said.

“Our lives are very happy and very free now,” the textile company worker said.

These and thousands of other videos are meant to look like unfiltered glimpses of life in Xinjiang, the western Chinese region where the Communist Party has carried out repressive policies against Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities.



Most of the clips carry no logos or other signs that they are official propaganda.

But taken together, the videos begin to reveal clues of broader coordination — such as the English subtitles in clips posted to YouTube and other Western platforms.

A monthslong analysis of more than 3,000 of the videos by ProPublica and The New York Times found evidence of an influence campaign orchestrated by the Chinese government.

The operation has produced and spread thousands of videos in which Chinese citizens deny abuses against their own communities and scold foreign officials and multinational corporations who dare question the Chinese government’s human rights record in Xinjiang.

It all amounts to one of China’s most elaborate efforts to shape global opinion.

Beijing is trying to use savvy and more forceful methods to broadcast its political messages to a worldwide audience. And Western internet platforms like Twitter and YouTube are playing a key part.

Many of these videos of people in Xinjiang

first appeared on a regional Communist Party news app. Then they showed up on YouTube and other global sites, with English subtitles added. (The excerpts of dialogue in this article are translated from the original spoken Chinese or Uyghur by ProPublica and The Times. They are not taken from the English subtitles in the original videos.)

On Twitter, a network of connected accounts shared the videos in ways that seemed designed to avoid the platform’s systems for detecting influence campaigns.

China’s increasingly social-media-fluent diplomats and state-run news outlets have since spread the testimonials to audiences of millions worldwide.

Western platforms like Twitter and YouTube are banned in China out of fear they might be used to spread political messaging — which is exactly how Chinese officials are using these platforms in the rest of the world.

They are, in essence, high-speed propaganda pipelines for Beijing. In just a few days, videos establishing the Communist Party’s version of reality can be shot, edited and amplified across the global internet.



How the Videos Work

The dialogue in hundreds of the Xinjiang videos contains strikingly similar, and often identical, phrases and structures.

Most videos are in Chinese or Uyghur and follow the same basic script. The subject introduces themselves, then explains how their own happy, prosperous life means there couldn't possibly be repressive policies in Xinjiang.

Here's a typical clip, shot as a selfie.

A four-character Chinese phrase meaning "born and raised" appears in more than 280 of the more than 2,000 videos attacking Pompeo that ProPublica and the Times found on YouTube and Twitter.

The people in more than 1,000 of the videos say they have recently come across Pompeo's remarks, most of them "on the internet" or on specific platforms such as Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok.

An expression meaning "complete nonsense" and close variations of it appear in more than 600 of the videos.

Establishing that government officials had a hand in making these testimonials is sometimes just a matter of asking.

In one clip, the owner of a used car dealership in Xinjiang says: "Pompeo, shut your mouth."

When reached by phone, the man said local propaganda authorities had produced the clip. When asked for details, he gave the number of an official he called Mr. He, saying, "Why don't you ask the head of the propaganda department?"

Multiple calls to Mr. He's number were not answered. Seven other people in the videos whose contact information could be found either declined to be interviewed or couldn't be reached. (The name of the car dealership's owner is being withheld to protect him from retribution by Chinese officials.)

In another sign of government coordination, language in the videos echoes written denunciations of Pompeo that Chinese state agencies issued around the same time.

Beginning in late January, government workers across Xinjiang held meetings to "speak out and show the sword" against "Pompeo's anti-China lies," according to statements on official websites.

The clips' effectiveness as propaganda comes in part because they will probably be most people's only glimpse into Xinjiang, a remote desert region closer to Kabul than to Beijing.

The Chinese authorities have thwarted efforts by journalists and others to gain unfettered access to the indoctrination camps where hundreds of thousands of Muslims have been sent for reeducation.

On government-led tours of the region, foreign diplomats and reporters have been allowed to speak with locals only under Chinese officials' watchful eyes, often in settings that seem staged and scripted.



For Western platforms hosting the Xinjiang testimonials, the fact that they are not immediately obvious as state propaganda poses a challenge.

To promote transparency, sites like YouTube and Twitter label accounts and posts that are associated with governments. The Xinjiang videos, however, carry no such tags.

YouTube said the clips did not violate its community guidelines. Twitter declined to comment on the videos, adding that it routinely releases data on campaigns that it can “reliably attribute to state-linked activity.”

How the Videos Spread

The video campaign started this year after the State Department declared on Jan. 19, the final full day of the Trump presidency, that China was committing genocide in Xinjiang.

“I’ve referred to this over time as the stain of the century — it is truly that,” Pompeo said.

Within days, videos criticising Pompeo began appearing on an app called Pomegranate Cloud, which is owned by the regional arm of the official Communist Party newspaper, People’s Daily. The name of the app is a reference to a propaganda slogan that calls on people of all ethnic groups in China to be as closely united as pomegranate seeds.

From there, the videos often jumped onto other Chinese platforms before making their way onto global social media sites like Twitter and YouTube.

On Twitter, ProPublica and The Times found, the clips were shared by more than 300 accounts whose posts strongly suggested they were no ordinary users. The accounts often posted messages that were identical but for a random string of characters at the end with no obvious meaning, either four Roman letters, five Chinese characters or three symbols such as percentage signs or parentheses.

Such strings were found in about three-quarters of the accounts’ tweets. They caused the text of the posts to vary slightly, in an apparent attempt to bypass Twitter’s automated anti-spam filters.

There were other signs that the Twitter accounts were part of a coordinated operation.

All of the accounts had been registered only in recent months. Many of them followed zero other users. Nearly all had fewer than five followers. The bulk of their tweeting took place between 10 a.m. and 8 p.m. Beijing time.

The text of several of the accounts’ tweets contained traces of computer code, indicating that they had been posted, sloppily, by software.

Twitter suspended many of these accounts in March and April, before ProPublica and The Times inquired about them. Twitter said the accounts had violated its policies against platform manipulation and spam.

The accounts did not upload Xinjiang clips directly to Twitter. Rather, they tweeted links to videos on YouTube or retweeted videos that had been originally posted by other Twitter accounts.

Those YouTube and Twitter accounts often posted copies of the same Xinjiang videos



at roughly the same time, according to analysis by ProPublica and The Times. Nearly three-quarters of the copied clips were posted by different accounts within 30 minutes of one another. This suggests the posts were coordinated, even though the accounts had no obvious connection.

Most of these accounts — seven on Twitter and nearly two dozen on YouTube — posted dozens of videos that originally appeared on Pomegranate Cloud. The accounts seem to have served solely as warehouses to store the clips, making it easier for other accounts in the network to share them.

How the Campaign Is Evolving

The effort continues to evolve. In some cases, state media and government officials have begun to openly spread the clips attacking Pompeo. Other videos have found new issues and people to target.

In one clip, a woman denies accusations of forced labor. “I have five greenhouses, and no one forces me to work,” she says.

She turns the camera toward several other women behind her.

“Friends, is anyone forcing you to work?” she asks. “No!” they cry in unison.

The clip was posted by Global Times, a state-controlled newspaper, on the Chinese platform Kuaishou on Jan. 25. Two days later, the video was posted on Twitter and You-

Tube by the warehouse accounts within 30 minutes of one another. Just over a week later, two representatives for China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs posted the clip on Twitter as well.

The ministry did not respond to a faxed request for comment, nor did the Xinjiang offices of the Communist Party propaganda department.

Two months later, another wave of videos, shot in the same style and distributed in a similar way, raged against H&M and other international clothing brands that have expressed concern about possible labor abuses in Xinjiang’s cotton and textile industries.

In one video, a Uyghurs woman sits on a couch with her husband and young son.

“Mom, what’s H&M?” the boy asks.

“H&M is a foreign company that uses our Xinjiang cotton and speaks ill of our Xinjiang,” she says. “Tell me, is H&M bad or what?”

“Very bad,” the boy says stiffly.

The clip was posted on Pomegranate Cloud on March 29. Six days later, it was posted on Twitter and YouTube, 20 minutes apart, by two warehouse accounts. As with all of the other clips that appeared on those platforms, English subtitles were added somewhere along the way, seemingly for the benefit of international audiences.

The anti-H&M campaign continues. By June 21, more than 800 cotton-related videos had been posted to Pomegranate Cloud, a large share of which were later reposted on YouTube or Twitter.

New videos are being uploaded to Pomegranate Cloud nearly every day. That means the campaign, which has already enlisted thousands of people in Xinjiang — teachers, shopkeepers, farmhands — could keep growing.

The audience outside China for the videos could also keep expanding.

The warehouse accounts on YouTube have attracted more than 480,000 views in total. People on YouTube, TikTok and other platforms have cited the testimonials to argue that all is well in Xinjiang — and received hundreds of thousands of additional views.

In a phone interview, Pompeo said friends, and occasionally his son, had come across the Xinjiang testimonials online and sent them to him.

As clumsy as the videos seem, he said, their influence should not be dismissed: “In places that don’t have access to a great deal of media, that repetition, those storylines have an ability to take hold.”

China’s propaganda efforts will keep getting better, Pompeo added. “They’ll continue to revise and become quicker, more authentic in their capacity to deliver this message,” he said.

How the Videos Divided a Family

For one Uyghur activist living in exile in the United States since 2005, the videos have had a more personal impact.

Several of the Xinjiang videos feature family members of Rebiya Kadeer, 74, whom the Chinese government has accused of abetting terrorism. In one clip, two of Kadeer’s granddaughters lash out at Pompeo while out shopping for a wedding.

“Grandma, I recently saw online that Pompeo’s making reckless claims and



talking nonsense about our Xinjiang,” one granddaughter says. “I hope you won’t be fooled again by those bad foreigners.”

Kadeer said the videos were the first time she had heard her relatives’ voices in years.

“I have been crying in my heart about my children,” she said in a phone interview.

Kadeer said the videos had given her a chance to see what had become of her granddaughters. The last time she saw them, they were infants.

“Some people will believe these videos and believe Uyghurs are living a happy life,” she said. “We can’t say they have locked up everyone. But what they’re saying in these videos – it’s not true. They know they’re not speaking the truth. But they have to say what the Chinese government wants them to say.”

By Jeff Kao, ProPublica, and Raymond Zhong, Paul Mozur and Aaron Krolnik, The New York Times



Twelve years ago, more than 50 Uyghur youth (including women) were brutally killed by racist Han Chinese at the Xuri toy factory in Shaoguan city.

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