

XINJIANG 2022 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), which cites the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), states that citizens “enjoy freedom of religious belief” but limits protections for religious practice to “normal religious activities,” without defining “normal.” National regulations require all clergy to pledge allegiance to the CCP and socialism, “resist illegal religious activities and religious extremist ideology, and resist infiltration by foreign forces using religion.” Additional Xinjiang-specific “Construction of Public Safety” regulations took effect on January 1 that call for a “crack down” on “ethnic separatist forces, evil terrorist forces, religious extremist forces, and other illegal and criminal activities that endanger national security.” No religious group may carry out any religious activities without government approval. Regional regulations implementing the national counterterrorism law permit the establishment of “vocational skills education training centers” to “carry out anti-extremist ideological education.” Minors are prohibited from receiving religious education or participating in religious activities.

The U.S. government estimates that since April 2017, authorities have detained more than one million Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, Hui, members of other Muslim groups, as well as some Christians in specially built internment camps or converted detention facilities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) under the national counterterrorism and regional counterextremism laws. Several human rights groups estimate the number of individuals detained in internment camps or other facilities was higher, possibly including up to 3.5 million. The PRC government continued to cite what it called the “three evils” of “ethnic separatism, religious extremism, and violent terrorism” to justify enacting and enforcing restrictions on religious practices of Muslims and members of non-Muslim religious minority groups. In August, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) published an assessment that stated the government committed “serious human rights violations” in the region that may “constitute international crimes, in particular, crimes against humanity.” The assessment stated that in recent years, the government reduced the number of

persons interned in “re-education” camps but increased the number formally incarcerated under vague charges of terrorism and “extremism.” Media and human rights organizations reported individuals received lengthy prison sentences for personal expressions of religious identity and beliefs, such as praying, owning a Quran, or growing a beard. The OHCHR cited survivors’ accounts of forced disappearance, torture, other physical and psychological abuse, including forced sterilization and sexual abuse, political indoctrination, and prolonged detention without trial because of their religion and ethnicity.

In a February report, the International Labor Organization (ILO) said the government engaged in a “widespread and systematic program” involving the “extensive use of forced labor” of Uyghurs and members of other predominantly Muslim minority groups for agriculture and industrial activities in the region. The whereabouts of hundreds of prominent Uyghur intellectuals, religious scholars, cultural figures, doctors, journalists, artists, academics, and other professionals, in addition to many other citizens the government arrested or detained, remained unknown. There continued to be reports of individuals dying of injuries sustained during interrogations, medical neglect, and torture. The OHCHR assessment said the government linked reproduction “to an expansive notion of religious ‘extremism.’” In June, the European Parliament found “credible evidence about birth-prevention measures and the separation of Uyghur children from their families amount[ing] to crimes against humanity and represent[ing] a serious risk of genocide.”

Media, academics, and nongovernmental (NGO) advocacy groups reported authorities continued to implement a variety of different methods, including home inspections, to ensure families were not observing religious practices such as praying, banned civil servants, students, and teachers from observing Ramadan, and limited fasting for the holiday. According to government sources, eyewitness accounts, and media reports, the government encouraged and, in some cases, required neighbors to spy on each other. Other surveillance techniques included the use of ubiquitous and increasingly sophisticated technology, as well as the government’s ongoing “Pair Up and Become Family” program, which forced Uyghurs to accept government officials and CCP members as assigned “relatives” to live in their homes. In June, a security and technology

research group stated that police screened “23 million Xinjiang residents for ‘terrorism’ with facial recognition and license plate cameras, flagging those with ties overseas for ‘immediate arrest.’” According to media reports, the government continued to close and, in some cases, destroy mosques in the XUAR, or remove their Islamic features; it converted some mosques into tourist attractions. Data from 2020 (the most recent available) estimated that nearly 900,000 Uyghur children, including some preschool-aged, were involuntarily separated from their families and living in boarding schools or orphanages, where they studied ethnic Han culture, Mandarin language, and CCP ideology. The government continued to seek to forcibly repatriate Uyghur and other Muslim citizens from abroad and detained many who returned. The government continued to harass and threaten Uyghurs living abroad, particularly those who spoke out against regime abuses. During his visit to the region in July, President Xi Jinping promoted the government’s ongoing policy of “Sinicizing” Islam and bringing religious doctrine in line with CCP ideology.

Unequal treatment in society of Uyghur Muslims and Han Chinese continued in parallel with authorities’ policy of suppressing Uyghur language, culture, and religious practices while promoting the Han majority in political, economic, and cultural life. Muslims reported severe societal discrimination in employment and business opportunities and travel.

The U.S. Ambassador and other embassy officials met with national government officials to advocate for the human rights of Uyghur Muslims and members of other Muslim and non-Muslim minority groups in Xinjiang. The U.S. government used a variety of diplomatic and economic tools to promote religious freedom and accountability in Xinjiang, including sanctions, visa restrictions, controls on exports and imports, and a business advisory to raise awareness among U.S. companies of the risks of doing business in the region. In February, the United States declined to send diplomatic or official representation to the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic and Paralympics Games due to concerns with what the presidential press secretary described as the PRC’s “ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang and other human rights abuses.” Throughout the year, senior U.S. government officials, including the Secretary of State, made multiple statements condemning the PRC’s atrocities and human rights abuses in

Xinjiang, and President Joe Biden raised the issue with President Xi during their meeting in November during the G20 conference in Bali, Indonesia. In June, the United States joined a group of 47 countries in issuing a joint statement in the UN Human Rights Council and in October joined 50 countries in a statement at the UN General Assembly condemning human rights abuses in Xinjiang. The embassy and consulates general delivered direct messages about religious freedom in Xinjiang through social media posts and promoted online engagement on the issue of freedom of religion or belief for members of Xinjiang's ethnic Muslim minorities.

Section I. Religious Demography

A 2021 report on the XUAR issued by the Department of Population and Employment Statistics of the National Bureau of Statistics estimates the total population at 26 million. The report states Uyghurs, along with Kazakhs, Hui, Kyrgyz, Tajiks, and members of other predominantly Muslim ethnic minority groups constitute approximately 15 million individuals, or approximately 58 percent of the total population. According to the report, 12 million of these are Uyghurs. The largest segment of the remaining population is Han Chinese (11 million, or approximately 42 percent of the population), with additional groups including Mongols, Tibetans, and others constituting less than 1 percent. Uyghurs are overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim. The *Globe and Mail* reported in 2019 that according to sources in the region, Uyghur and Han Chinese Christians likely number in the thousands.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution, which cites the leadership of the CCP and the guidance of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong and Xi Jinping Thought, states that citizens “enjoy freedom of religious belief” but limits protections for religious practice to “normal religious activities,” without defining “normal.” The constitution provides for the right to hold or not to hold religious belief. It provides that state

organs, public organizations, and individuals may not discriminate against citizens “who believe in, or do not believe in, any religion.”

The government recognizes five official religions: Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Roman Catholicism. Only religious groups belonging to one of five state-sanctioned “patriotic religious associations” (the Buddhist Association of China, the Chinese Taoist Association, the Islamic Association of China, the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association) representing these religions are permitted to register with the government and legally hold worship services or other religious ceremonies and activities.

The Regulations on Religious Affairs require that religious activity “must not harm national security.” While the regulations stipulate religious groups must abide by the law, safeguard national unity, and respond to “religious extremism,” the term “extremism” is undefined. Measures to safeguard unity and respond to “religious extremism” include monitoring groups, individuals, and institutions, and recommending penalties such as suspending groups and canceling clergy credentials.

In addition to the national counterterrorism law, Xinjiang has its own counterterrorism and “de-extremification” laws containing similar provisions to the national law regarding “religious extremism.” These laws ban wearing long beards, full-face coverings, and religious dress; expanding halal practice beyond food and daily prayer; and “interfering” with family planning, weddings, funerals, or inheritance, among other provisions. The law limits the information that may be released to the public following any incident authorities define as a terror attack. Other XUAR regulations prohibit veils that cover the face, homeschooling children, “abnormal beards,” practicing religion in government buildings, and wearing clothes associated with “religious extremism.” These regulations do not define “abnormal” or “religious extremism.”

Regional regulations implementing the national counterterrorism law permit the establishment of “vocational skills education training centers” (which the government also calls “education centers” and “education and transformation establishments”) to “carry out anti-extremist ideological education.” The

regulations stipulate that “institutions such as vocational skills education training centers should carry out training sessions on the common national language, laws and regulations, and vocational skills, and carry out anti-extremist ideological education, and psychological and behavioral correction to promote thought transformation of trainees and help them return to the society and family.”

CCP members and retired government officials, including Uyghurs, are required to be atheists and are forbidden from engaging in religious practices. CCP members who are found to belong to religious organizations are subject to various types of punishment, including termination of their employment and expulsion from the CCP.

Authorities in the XUAR have defined 26 religious activities as illegal without prior government authorization. Regional regulations stipulate no classes, scripture study groups, or religious studies courses may be offered by any group or institution without prior government approval. No religious group may carry out any religious activities, including preaching, missionary work, proselytizing, and ordaining clergy, without government approval. Regional regulations also ban editing, translation, publication, printing, reproduction, production, distribution, sale, and dissemination of religious publications and audiovisual products without authorization.

Xinjiang officials require minors to complete nine years of compulsory public education before they may receive religious education outside of school. Xinjiang regulations also forbid minors from participating in religious activities and impose penalties on organizations and individuals who “organize, entice, or force” minors to participate in religious activities. A regulation further bans any form of religious activity in Xinjiang schools and stipulates parents or guardians who “organize, lure, or force minors into religious activities” may be stopped by anyone and reported to police. Xinjiang’s regional version of the national Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency Law states children affected by ethnic separatism, extremism, and terrorism, or committing offenses that seriously endanger society but do not warrant a criminal punishment, may be sent to “specialized schools for correction” at the request of their parents, guardians, or the school.

The State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA) “Administrative Measures for Religious Clergy,” a set of nationwide regulations that took effect in May 2021, require all clergy to pledge allegiance to the PRC and socialism and to create a database of “religious personnel” to track their performance. These regulations apply to Xinjiang.

On January 1, the “Regulations of the XUAR on the Development of Public Safety” went into effect. The regulations call for a “crack down” on “ethnic separatist forces, violent terrorist forces, religious extremist forces, and other illegal and criminal activities that endanger national security....” The regulations also call for “controlling illegal religious activities, illegal religious propaganda materials, and illegal religious network dissemination in accordance with the law and continuing to promote de-radicalization.” The regulations reference *xie jiao* (literally “heterodox teachings”) and state that authorities will “carry out anti-cult [i.e., anti-*xie jiao*] propaganda and education, prevent and crack down on various cult organizations, and effectively educate and reform individuals involved in cults.” They also call for full implementation across the entire XUAR of a grid system of social surveillance that had previously been used only in certain parts of the region.

On March 1, the “Measures for the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services” came into effect nationwide, banning unauthorized domestic online religious content and prohibiting overseas organizations and individuals from operating online religious information services in the country. The new measures ban content that uses “religion to incite subversion of state sovereignty, oppose the leadership of the Communist Party, undermine the socialist system, national and ethnic unity, and social stability, or to advocate extremism, terrorism, ethnic separatism, and religious fanaticism,” and that uses “religion to obstruct the implementation of the state's judicial, educational, marriage, social management, and other systems.” The measures require that any individual or organization engaging in “cyberspace religious information releasing services, reposting services, and dissemination platform services,” such as streaming or publishing sermons, obtain a permit to do so within six months of the measures taking effect and validate that permit every three years. Without a

permit, organizations and individuals “must not proselytize online and must not carry out religious education or training, publish religious sermons or repost or link to related content, must not organize the carrying out of religious activities online, and must not broadcast religious rites such as obeisance to Buddha, burning incense, ordinations, services, masses, or baptisms through means such as text, images, audio, or video either live or in recordings.” To acquire a permit, individuals and organizations must apply to the religious affairs department of the government of the province, autonomous region, or municipality where they are located.

In addition to these nationwide rules, XUAR regulations on the administration of religious affairs require clerics to “uphold the leadership of the CCP and the socialist system, safeguard the reunification of the motherland and ethnic unity, be patriotic and loyal, and have high prestige and religious knowledge.”

National regulations of the Islamic Association of China, which is managed by the SARA under the leadership of the United Front Work Department, a CCP organ, require Muslim clerics to meet the following requirements: “uphold the leadership of the CCP; love Islam and serve Muslims; possess a degree or receive formal training in Islamic scriptural education; have graduated from junior high school or above, in addition to attaining competency in Arabic; and be at least 22 years old.”

To apply to become an Islamic cleric, applicants first need to submit an “Application Form for the Qualification of Islamic Clerics.” In addition, they must provide a certificate of education from an Islamic school, an education certificate from junior high school or above, and a physical examination certificate issued by a designated hospital (including items such as “mental history”). Applicants are also required to submit a household registration certificate and national identification card. The applicant must receive a letter of recommendation written by the Administration of Islamic Activity Sites where the applicant’s household registration is located and submit it to the Islamic Association of the province, autonomous region, or municipality after review and approval by the local Islamic Association.

Government Practices

According to multiple human rights NGOs and academic sources, authorities held more than one million Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, Hui, and members of other Muslim groups as well as some Christians in a vast network of camps since 2017. Many camps were reportedly co-located with factories, where sources said detainees were subjected to forced labor and “re-education.” Several human rights groups estimated the number of individuals interned to be up to 3.5 million. The government continued to use detentions to implement a XUAR-specific counterextremism policy that identified “extremist” behavior (including growing beards, wearing headscarves, praying, and abstaining from alcohol) in concert with the National Counterterrorism Law, which contains provisions on “religious extremism.”

According to media and NGO reports, the central government and XUAR authorities continued to cite what they called the “three evils” of “ethnic separatism, religious extremism, and violent terrorism” as justification to enact and enforce restrictions on religious practices of Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, Hui, and members of other Muslim and non-Muslim religious groups.

On June 9, the European Parliament adopted a resolution condemning the government’s treatment of Uyghurs and other indigenous peoples in Xinjiang. The resolution said the Uyghur community was “systematically oppressed by brutal measures, including mass deportation, political indoctrination, family separation, restrictions on religious freedom, cultural destruction, and the extensive use of surveillance.” It also said the “credible evidence about birth-prevention measures and the separation of Uyghur children from their families amount to crimes against humanity and represent a serious risk of genocide.” The resolution called on the government “to put an immediate end to the practice of arbitrary detention without charge, trial or conviction for criminal offenses targeted against Uyghurs and other ethnic Turkic peoples, to close all camps and detention centers, and to immediately and unconditionally release those detained.”

Then UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet visited Xinjiang in May and released an assessment on August 31 that concluded the government committed “serious human rights violations” in the region. Specifically, the OHCHR assessment stated, “The extent of arbitrary and discriminatory detention of members of Uyghur and other predominantly Muslim groups, pursuant to law and policy, in context of restrictions and deprivation more generally of fundamental rights enjoyed individually and collectively, may constitute international crimes, in particular crimes against humanity.” The report said the government appeared in recent years to use fewer “re-education” centers, in favor of “a shift towards formal incarcerations as the principal means for large-scale imprisonment and deprivation of liberty. This is of particular concern, given the vague and capacious definitions of terrorism, ‘extremism,’ and public security-related offences under domestic criminal law.”

On September 7, 40 UN independent experts and special rapporteurs issued a statement in support of the OHCHR assessment. The statement said, “China’s policies and practices have limited the legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of religion or belief, the right to family life including reproductive rights for women, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to assemble and associate peacefully, the right to privacy, the right to cultural life, and the right to live free from arbitrary detention, forced labor as well as freedom from any violation of the right to life and from torture, inhuman and degrading treatment and from enforced disappearance as well as the right of religious and ethnic minorities to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.”

In April, the UN Special Rapporteur for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism Fionnuala Ni Aolain, presented a report to the UN Human Rights Council about global practices on secret detention. The report stated her team found “grave concerns about practices of arbitrary mass and secret detention with other serious violations of international law directed at the Uighurs and other ethnic groups” in the Xinjiang region. She also said, “Justified under the banner of ‘re-education,’ we have found that these detention practices impinge on the most fundamental of rights, including the right not to be arbitrarily deprived of liberty.”

In March, Amnesty International in its report *The State of the World's Human Rights* stated that “crimes against humanity persisted against Muslims living in Xinjiang, and the human rights situation deteriorated.” The report said that despite government claims to have closed internment camps by 2019, there remained credible evidence that “the government continued a campaign of arbitrary mass detention, combined with violence and intimidation to root out Islamic religious beliefs and Turkic Muslim ethno-cultural practices.”

In a report published on July 6, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) stated, “Under the pretext of combating instability and countering terrorism, the CCP is coercively altering the human and physical geography of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region through the mass surveillance, detention, and re-education of its indigenous Turkic-speaking population.”

The ASPI’s Xinjiang Data Project satellite analysis indicated the government continued to operate 385 detention centers in Xinjiang. In some cases, authorities used repurposed schools, factories, and prisons to hold detainees, although reports from the region indicated authorities closed or repurposed the makeshift detention centers in cities and built larger detention centers outside the cities. In September, the *Washington Post* published an article on a reporter’s July visit to Kashgar (Chinese: Kashi) and Hotan Prefectures. The reporter found that some of the sites the Xinjiang Data Project identified as re-education camps appeared to have been converted into coronavirus quarantine facilities, teacher training schools, or vocational schools. According to the *Post*, “Satellite images show watchtowers, a security feature of detention centers, had been removed from the perimeters of some buildings in 2020.”

In May, the *Journal of the European Association of Chinese Studies* published an analysis titled, “The Xinjiang Police Files: Re-Education Camp Security and Political Paranoia in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.” The author analyzed a cache of more than 300,000 personal records and 23,000 detainee records in Konasheher (Shufu) County, Kashgar Prefecture, and Tekes County, Ili Kazakh (Yili Hasake) Autonomous Prefecture, from 2000 to 2018. The records were leaked to researchers and known as the “Xinjiang Police Files.” The analysis

indicated that in 2018, authorities maintained police files on virtually every one of the 280,000 inhabitants in Konasheher County. Authorities sentenced approximately one in 25 persons to prison on “terrorism-related charges.” The analysis concluded the approximately 12.3-12.7 percent of Konasheher County’s adults were in some form of internment in re-education, detention, or prison facilities in 2018, meaning Konasheher’s combined per capita internment/imprisonment rate was more than 64 times higher than the national imprisonment rate.

The Xinjiang Police Files analysis stated the files contained a spreadsheet entitled “Persons subject to the Strike Hard campaign because of religion,” referencing the campaign against terrorism. The spreadsheet listed 330 persons whom authorities sentenced for illegal religious activities such as studying the Quran. The spreadsheet included information on one man from Konasheher whom authorities sentenced to 13 years in prison because “from August 2014 to April 2017, the suspect, Tursun Kadir, grew a beard under the influence of religious extremism.” Authorities imprisoned another man, Ghulam Tursun, for “illegal study of the scriptures” and having one “extra” child. An unnamed woman was sentenced to six years in prison for “possessing Wahhabist ideology and currently engaging in extremist religious speech and practice.” Authorities also detained her husband and 14-year-old daughter for what the author called “guilt by association.”

In March, Radio Free Asia (RFA) reported the government detained 500 men and 270 women in one prison camp in Manas County in Changji Hui Autonomous Prefecture. A former prison guard said most of the detainees had been arrested for “serious crimes,” such as “praying five times a day.”

There continued to be numerous reports of individuals being incarcerated, sometimes for lengthy periods of time, held under harsh conditions, physically and sexually abused, and subjected to involuntary sterilization. Many individuals disappeared in prior years, but relatives only learned what happened to them during the year. Some ethnic Uyghur and Kazakh individuals who had been held in detention facilities managed to emigrate abroad during the year, where they were able to speak with human rights NGOs and journalists about their

experiences. Local observers continued to say that many incidents related to abuses or pressure on Uyghurs and other Muslims went unreported to international media or NGOs due to government restrictions on the free flow of information.

The OHCHR interviewed multiple former prisoners and detainees who reported authorities subjected them to beatings, rape, electric shock, waterboarding, stress positions, sleep deprivation, force-feeding, forced prostitution, forced sterilization, forced administration of unknown medication, and other physical and psychological abuse. Authorities denied prisoners adequate food and medical treatment. The report stated, “Some [former detainees] also noted that they were not allowed to speak their own language (whether Uyghur or Kazakh) and could not practice their religion, such as pray, which they experienced as a further hardship.” Although prison authorities abused ordinary prisoners, they reportedly singled out political and religious dissidents for particularly harsh treatment. Survivors said they were subject to relentless political indoctrination. According to one individual, “We were forced to sing patriotic song after patriotic song every day, as loud as possible and until it hurt, until our faces became red and our veins appeared on our face.”

The *Associated Press* (AP) reported in February that authorities sentenced Sattar Sawut to death and three others to life in prison in 2021 for publishing textbooks that referenced historical resistance movements, information that previously was CCP approved. Sawut was a former Uyghur official in the Xinjiang Education Department. The AP said the severe sentences imposed on the four individuals illustrated the government’s determination to control the narrative taught to Uyghurs in schools.

In January, *Bitter Winter*, an online publication that tracks religious liberty and human rights abuses, published a survivor’s account of an elderly Uyghur couple whom authorities detained in 2017 when they returned from attending a daughter’s wedding in Turkey. Authorities handcuffed them upon arrest and placed bags over their heads. The husband, a Uyghur scholar, described days-long interrogations about their travel to Turkey. The scholar said officials beat him so badly during his fifth interrogation session that he sustained a significant

lung injury. He said that after authorities gave him emergency medical treatment, they released him. He said that while he was detained, he observed authorities taking some inmates away for “medical checkups,” during which the inmates reportedly received injections that caused them to die within hours of returning to their cells.

During the year, RFA reported on multiple deaths in prison of persons accused of religious crimes that occurred in prior years but were not previously known. On March 14, RFA reported Uyghur Abdureshid Obul died in prison in 2020. In 2017, authorities sent Obul to a reeducation camp for two years for helping his wife evade authorities to avoid undergoing a forced abortion, before sentencing him in 2019 to eight years in prison for “disrupting the social order” and “religious extremism.” On March 29, RFA reported that Uyghur Zeynebhan Memtimin died in prison in 2020 from unknown causes while serving a 10-year sentence for “disturbing the social order” and “religious extremism” after she escaped from a hospital to avoid undergoing a forced abortion in 2014. On May 22, RFA reported that Uyghur Yaqub Hesén died on May 1, days after authorities released him from a prison in Ghulja (Yining) County, Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture. According to a neighborhood committee official, authorities jailed Hesén “for praying.” An area resident told RFA many Uyghurs died after being released from nearby prisons and camps.

The online newsletter *TheConversation.com* reported in January that according to an academic from Simon Fraser University in Canada specializing in Xinjiang, authorities appeared to detain fewer individuals during the year than in prior years, but there continued to be widespread family separation and “hundreds of thousands of people” were still missing. The academic said individuals outside the internment and prison system lived under repressive surveillance in “sort of an open-air prison.”

In February, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that Uyghur Shemsiye Ali’s parents disappeared after they returned to Xinjiang from visiting her in Istanbul in 2016. Ali said her parents called her and her sister in 2017 to tell them not to contact them. After the phone call, Ali’s other relatives began deleting her from WeChat, a Chinese social media platform. She later learned from a family friend in the

region that in 2019 and again in 2021 authorities sent her father to “training,” a euphemism for internment in a reeducation camps. According to the *Times*, “It was as if [Ali’s] family in China had vanished into a parallel world. Detentions were so widespread that every Uyghur whom Ali knew had lost someone.”

In February, the online magazine *Geopolitics* (TGP) reported the authorities’ campaign of arbitrary detention had targeted ethnic Uyghur, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz intellectuals as carriers of “cultural memory.” Citing a December 2021 Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP) report, *The Disappearance of Uyghur Intellectual and Cultural Elites: A New Form of Eliticide*, TGP said authorities had arrested, detained, or disappeared at least 312 leading Uyghur and other Turkic Muslim intellectuals in the region as of late 2021. TGP stated, “The persecution of intellectual and cultural producers is nothing less than a form of ‘eliticide’ that effectively destroys any hope of collective resistance to the Chinese government’s campaign to ideologically purify Uyghurs. The Uyghur eliticide is a key tool to control – or perhaps altogether annihilate – Uyghur identity.” The UHRP report highlighted the 2017 disappearances of Gulnisa Imin, a literature teacher and poet who promoted Uyghur language and culture through her self-published works; Abdubesir Shukuri, a professor and dean of the Literature Department at Xinjiang Normal University, noted for his scholarship, conducted in Uyghur and Mandarin, on Uyghur classical literature and Turkic Central Asian philosophy, religion, and belief systems; and Exmet Momin Tarimi, a calligrapher, scholar, and editor of the *Xinjiang People’s Press*. In December 2021, RFA reported authorities sentenced Imin to 17 years and six months’ imprisonment on unknown charges.

The OHCHR’s August assessment stated authorities sexually abused prisoners in detention centers. According to the report, “Allegations were also made [by former detainees] of instances of sexual and gender-based violence...including of rape, which also appear credible and would in themselves amount to acts of torture or other forms of ill-treatment. The government’s blanket denials of all allegations, as well as its gendered and humiliating attacks on those who have come forward to share their experiences, have added to the indignity and suffering of survivors.”

The OHCHR assessment described survivor accounts of sexual and gender-based violence, including prisoners “having been forced by guards to perform oral sex in the context of an interrogation and various forms of sexual humiliation, including forced nudity. The accounts similarly described rapes taking place outside the dormitories, in separate rooms without cameras. In addition, several women recounted being subject to invasive gynecological examinations, including one woman who described this taking place in a group setting which ‘made old women ashamed and young girls cry.’” In its report published in March, *The State of the World’s Human Rights 2021/2022*, Amnesty International stated the PRC conducted a “smear campaign” against former women detainees for publicly discussing the sexual violence they experienced in government “re-education centers.”

In November, the UHRP published a report, *Forced Marriage of Uyghur Women: State Policies for Interethnic Marriage in East Turkistan*. The report said the government pressured single Uyghur women to marry Han Chinese men as “a tactic intended to assimilate Uyghurs into Han society” through various policy incentives, including monetary “ethnic intermarriage awards.” The report cited local propaganda, which quoted the father of a Uyghur woman married to a Han husband as saying authorities “introduced many policies to encourage [Uyghur-Han] intermarriage, such as land, cash, and subsidies for housing, children’s education, and other things.” The report stated that in a general atmosphere of intimidation and facing the threat of internment, many Uyghur women felt unable to refuse marriage offers from Han men. According to the report, “Forced and incentivized marriages in the Uyghur region are forms of gender-based crimes that violate international human rights standards and further the ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity being committed” there.

In January, RFA reported the welfare and whereabouts of Uyghur Hasiyet Emet, a resident of Manas (Manasi) County, Changji Hui Autonomous Prefecture, remained unknown at year’s end. Authorities arrested Emet at her home in 2017 and subsequently sentenced her to 14 years in prison – seven for teaching children the Quran and seven for attempting to hide two copies of the Quran when police began confiscating religious books from residents. Sources told RFA Emet had stopped teaching children two years prior to her arrest.

Sources reported many prominent figures remained in prison. These included Uyghur scholars Ilham Tohti; Rahile Dawut; Hushtar Isa, brother of Uyghur World Congress president Dolkun Isa; retired Uyghur medical doctor Gulshan Abbas; and Uyghur entrepreneur Ekpar Asat. In February, *Newsweek* published an essay by Ziba Murat about her mother Dr. Abbas. Murat wrote that she had not heard from her mother since Abbas's detainment in 2018. She stated her mother's imprisonment was due to "one simple fact: the Chinese Communist Party can't see past her ethnicity. She is in prison for the crime of being Uyghur."

In March, Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that authorities had imprisoned seven Uyghur students who studied under imprisoned Uyghur scholar Ilham Tohti. According to a government list of prisoners leaked in December 2021, authorities arrested Abduqeyum Ablimit, Mutellip Imin, Perhat Halmurat, Atikem Rozi, Shohret Nijat, Akbar Imin, and Luo Yuwei in December 2014 and sentenced the group to between three-and-a-half to eight years in prison. Although all seven students should have completed their sentences by the end of 2022, their whereabouts remained unknown at year's end.

RFA reported in April that Qurban Mamut, former editor in chief of the Uyghur journal *Xinjiang Civilization*, was serving a 15-year sentence for "political crimes." RFA stated it was unclear exactly when Mamut was sentenced but an anonymous local police officer stated to RFA that he had received a document two years earlier about Mamut's sentencing. Mamut disappeared in 2017 shortly after visiting his son in the United States.

Also in April, RFA reported authorities arrested approximately 100 Uyghur residents from Sheyih Mehelle village, Ghulja County, Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, on unknown charges. According to RFA, those arrested included multiple members of the same families and represented 14 percent of the town's population. An RFA source said that based on the government's crackdown in the region, it was "not surprising" authorities detained such a large number of persons. RFA also reported that at first, authorities required relatives of those detained to attend political study sessions, but subsequently authorities transported the relatives, mostly women and some elderly men, by bus to

government-run factories in Ghulja City where they worked 10-12 hours a day under close supervision, making clothing and earning 1,000-2,000 renminbi (RMB) (\$150-\$300) per month.

In May, citing a 2021 report by the UHRP titled *Islam Dispossessed: China's Persecution of Uyghur Imams and Religious Figures*, RFA said authorities detained or imprisoned more than 1,000 imams and religious leaders in Xinjiang from 2014 to 2019. In its report, the UHRP stated this was likely “just the tip of the iceberg,” given the difficulty of obtaining reliable information on these detentions.

In October, RFA reported that beginning in July, authorities detained hundreds of Uyghurs in Xinjiang in a new round of its “Strike Hard” antiterrorism campaign in the lead-up to the CCP’s 20th Party Congress that month. RFA said the detentions targeted “Uyghurs who had recently turned 18, those released from internment camps in recent years, and those who managed to elude government monitoring in recent years.” A police officer in Aksu (Akesu) Prefecture told RFA the detentions were “safeguarding stability” and preventing incidents. An officer in Ghulja County told RFA police detained 125 individuals because they were “members of the dangerous generation,” a reference to Uyghurs who eluded arrest in 2017. The CCP branch secretary in lower Panjim village in Ghulja said that those most recently detained in that area “were mainly youth born after 2000 from the dangerous generation.” He said these young Uyghurs were “easily influenced” and “easily misled, so ... they need ‘education’ for a while.”

The NGO China Political Prisoners of Concern reported that in December, it learned that in 2018, authorities arrested ethnic Kazakh imam Serik Muqai, from Tacheng District, Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, and sentenced him to 20 years in prison for teaching Islam to children and the public. In 2017, authorities destroyed his rural mosque for being “too big for the village.”

During the year, RFA reported several cases of authorities detaining Uyghur educators. In April, RFA reported municipal education officials said that authorities had detained Uyghur high school principal Dilmurat Abdurehim in Ghulja County; he disappeared after leaving his home during Eid al-Fitr in May

2021. Sources told RFA they did not know what the charges were against Abdurehim or whether he was being held in prison or a reeducation internment camp. An official at one of the high schools where Abdurehim used to work told RFA information about his whereabouts was a “state secret” and that the school was not authorized to comment. In May, RFA reported authorities detained approximately 30 teachers from one high school in Ghulja County. Local authorities reported to RFA that they sent most of the detained teachers to reeducation centers but sentenced seven to prison. Local officials told RFA they could not divulge the charges against those seven because the details were “state secrets.”

Media outlets reported authorities continued to detain Uyghurs who had contacts with relatives living abroad. In November, RFA reported authorities sentenced the mother and sister-in-law of an ethnic Uyghur member of the Royal Netherlands Air Force to 15 years in prison for having contact with him. Captain Munirdin Jadikar, an ethnic Uyghur Dutch citizen living in the Netherlands since 2006, said his mother came to his wedding in the Netherlands in 2014. In 2018, using WeChat, his sister-in-law told him police in Xinjiang had arrested his mother and sent her to an internment camp. In 2019, Jadikar learned police subsequently arrested his sister-in-law for telling him about his mother. In 2021, after the Dutch Foreign Ministry inquired with the Chinese embassy, Jadikar learned that authorities sentenced both women to 15 years in prison – his mother for “supporting terrorist activities” and his sister-in-law for “providing national intelligence to enemy forces” i.e., the Royal Netherlands Air Force.

Dozens of media sources cited the collocation of detention facilities and industrial parks constructed in the region and in operation since 2017 as evidence that the government continued to utilize its mass detention system to carry out forced labor practices. The OHCHR assessment concluded, “The close link between the labor schemes and the counter-‘extremism’ framework, including the [reeducation] system, raises concerns in terms of the extent to which such programs can be considered fully voluntary.” The OHCHR assessment stated, “The Vocational Education and Training Center system amounts to large-scale arbitrary deprivation of liberty through involuntary placements in residential facilities and compulsory ‘training.’” The OHCHR said none of the former

detainees interviewed for the report said they were able to exit their facilities or go home for a visit. At the centers, those interviewed said they “observed significant security presence and guards armed with guns and/or batons (including electric ones), and mostly wearing police uniforms.” Detainees in centers told OHCHR they had to work within those facilities as part of the “graduation process” and risked being kept longer if they refused to comply. The OHCHR assessment said it could not confirm the government’s claim that it “closed” the centers in 2019, “primarily due to the lack of relevant official or other information since the end of 2019 and access for on-the-ground verification.” The assessment also stated, “Provisions in the [Xinjiang] Regulation on De-extremification, and other laws, regulations, and policies, impose deradicalization duties on enterprises and trade unions, based on the law’s own expansive criteria of religious ‘extremism.’”

In February, the ILO published its annual *Application of International Labor Standards Report*, in which it said the government, under the rubric of “poverty alleviation,” “vocational training,” “re-education through labor,” and “de-extremification,” was “engaging in a widespread and systematic program involving the extensive use of forced labor of the Uyghur and other Turkic and/or Muslim minorities for agriculture and industrial activities” in the region. Further, the report stated a key feature of the program is the use of forced or compulsory labor “in or around internment or ‘re-education’ camps housing 1.8 million” persons. According to the report, the camps were central to an indoctrination program focused on separating and “cleansing” ethnic and religious minorities from their culture, beliefs, and religion. The report stated authorities also utilized separate “centralized training centers” that had similar security features to the reeducation camps, such as high fences, security watchtowers, and barbed wire, provided similar education programs, such as classes on legal regulations and the Mandarin language, and conducted military drills. The ILO also reported the government used prison labor in the region, mainly in cotton harvesting and the manufacture of textiles, apparel, and footwear. The report stated the number of Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities imprisoned on charges of “terrorism,” “separatism,” and “religious extremism” increased dramatically beginning in 2017.

In February, the Atlantic Council published an investigative report, *Financing and Genocide: Development Finance and the Crisis in the Uyghur Region*, which concluded that authorities utilized public-private partnerships to carry out forced labor, providing financial incentives to domestic and international investors and companies to work on development projects in the region. Companies that accepted these financially advantageous deals were involved in arrangements that included building factories inside or adjacent to detention facilities, assisting in forced labor transfers or accepting forcibly transferred laborers, and failing to follow internationally acceptable guidelines to prevent forced labor from occurring. The report stated, “Because of the government's significant financial and political investment in these programs, it is unclear to what extent companies have a choice as to whether they accept transferred laborers or engage in other poverty alleviation programs in the region.” The report indicated that the World Bank’s International Finance Corporation and other development finance institutions had made significant investments in entities in the region that were engaged in forced labor practices.

In March, the *China Digital Times* published an interview with a professor from Sheffield Hallam University in the United Kingdom specializing in forced labor practices in Xinjiang. The professor said Xinjiang’s “poverty alleviation” and “labor transfer” programs differed from those in other areas of the country because any Xinjiang resident who refused to participate could be punished with internment. “It is the specter of the internment camps that makes government programs in the Uyghur region coercive and nearly ubiquitous.” Discussing Xinjiang’s cotton industry, the professor said the mechanization process left Uyghur farmers unemployed. The government treated these farmers as “surplus labor” and therefore subject to coercive state-sponsored labor transfers; individuals were not allowed to refuse such transfers. The professor said the government’s forced labor and forced labor transfer policies were “not so much capitalist as ideological, political, and cultural. Government directives clearly indicate that the purpose of the programs is to transform the Uyghur people from supposedly being ‘backwards’ and ‘lazy’ to being more like Han Chinese people. It is meant to urbanize the population and to move them to cities where the state can better control their behaviors and religious practices. It is designed to control

Uyghurs and to make them docile workers in the larger project of industrialization and Sinicization of the region.”

In a report published in April, the think tank Horizon Advisory stated there were “pervasive” indicators of forced labor across the aluminum industry in the region. The report said that “every one of the major aluminum companies operating in Xinjiang...is associated with government-led transfer of labor programs or related subprogramming in the region.”

According to the OHCHR’s August assessment, Xinjiang’s official birth rate sharply declined starting in 2017 following government implementation of a new family planning policy that limited the number of children couples could have, regardless of ethnicity, to two in urban areas and three in rural areas. The report stated, “Although the policies in XUAR have appeared nominally consistent with the government’s broader approach to population planning, it appears they are linked to an expansive notion of religious ‘extremism’, raising further concerns about discriminatory enforcement of these policies against Uyghur and other predominantly Muslim minorities.” According to the OHCHR, the government, in regional and county-level regulations as well as in documents such as its 2021 White Paper on “Xinjiang Population Dynamics and Data,” connected childbearing with religious extremism and family planning with counterextremist measures. XUAR religious affairs regulations prohibited “the use of religion” to obstruct family planning, and the XUAR 2017 Regulation on De-extremification included “deliberately interfering with or undermining the implementation of family planning policies” as one of the 15 “primary expressions” of religious extremism.

The OHCHR assessment concluded there were “credible indications of violations of reproductive rights” in the region through the government’s “coercive enforcement of family planning policies since 2017.” It stated predominately Uyghur areas saw the steepest declines in birth rates after 2017, with official statistics noting a sharp increase in sterilizations and intrauterine device (IUD) placements in the region at the same time. According to the OHCHR, the sterilization rate in Xinjiang was 243 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2018, compared with 32.1 per 100,000 inhabitants in the country overall. Several Uyghur and ethnic Kazakh women told the OHCHR that authorities conducted forced birth

control, in particular forced IUD placements and possible forced sterilizations. The women also said they were forced to have abortions after reaching the permitted number of children under the family planning policy. The OHCHR stated it found these first-hand accounts credible, and noted government documents indicating women who violated the family planning policy were also sent to reeducation centers.

NGOs and media reported the government continued its policy of “Sinicizing” religion, including Islamic practices in Xinjiang, as part of what RFA on May 22 characterized as its campaign to erase cultural distinctions by encouraging the narrative of a single Chinese identity. State-run *Xinjiang Daily* reported that XUAR chairman Erkin Tuniyaz said when he visited the Noghay Mosque in Urumqi on April 30, “According to the arrangements...of the autonomous region party committee, we must hold absolutely tight to the plan for Sinicizing the Islamic religion in Xinjiang and actively take the lead in fitting the Islamic religion into socialist society.” RFA reported Xinjiang Party Secretary Ma Xingrui wrote of Sinicization in the *People’s Daily*, emphasizing “the shared sense of belonging to the Chinese nation” and “ethnic fusion.”

President and General Secretary Xi Jinping visited Xinjiang in July, marking his first visit to the region since 2014. Many academics, research institutions, and human rights groups identified the 2014 trip as the starting point for the crackdown on the region’s ethnic minority communities. According to state media outlet *Xinhua*, during his July visit, Xi said, “We must better uphold the principle of developing Islam in the Chinese context and provide active guidance for the adaptation of religions to the socialist society... We must ensure that reasonable demands of religious believers be met and rally them around the Party and the government.” In a government video covering one event, a slogan behind Xi read, “All ethnicities are one loving family; collectively building the China Dream with one heart.”

In May, Turghanjan Alawudun, a vice chair of the executive committee of the World Uyghur Congress, told RFA, “The Sinicization of Islam is the eradication of Islam.”

The OHCHR's August assessment detailed numerous restrictions on religious activities in the region. According to the OHCHR, the government used the overly broad counterterrorism law to target Uyghurs and other Muslim minority groups for lawful religious practices by creating an environment "in which religious or cultural practice or expression is conflated with 'extremism.'" The report concluded government policies "specifically restrict and suppress practices that are part of the identity and cultural life of persons belonging to Uyghur and other predominantly Muslim minorities" and "raise concerns of discrimination against such minorities on prohibited grounds" under international human rights law.

In May, RFA reported that authorities forced Muslims in detention facilities to renounce their faith. In addition, authorities gathered and burned copies of the Quran, forced Uyghurs to eat pork, restricted the wearing of beards for men and of long clothing and headscarves for women, prohibited Uyghur parents from giving their children names such as "Muhammad" and "Ayishe" and, in cases where those names were given, implemented strict policies to change them.

RFA reported authorities continued to ban civil servants, students, and teachers from fasting during Ramadan. In April, RFA reported authorities sent notices to neighborhood committees in Urumqi and multiple prefectures that only 10-50 Muslims in certain areas would be allowed to fast during Ramadan and individuals observing the fast must register with the government. A local police officer in Kashgar Prefecture's Tokkuzak (Toukezhake) township told RFA the purpose of the registrations was to "allay the fears of [Muslims] who are afraid to fast, in addition to security, because there should not be any misconception about the CCP's religious policy. The Party never said to abolish religion, but to Sinicize it." One village administrator who oversaw 10 families in Ghulja County, Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, said only the elderly and adults with no school-age children were allowed to fast "to avoid religion having negative effects on children's minds." Another administrator who oversaw 10 families in Atush (Atushi) City, Kizilsu Kirghiz Autonomous Prefecture, said only two persons were allowed to fast – an elderly couple with no children at home. Turghunjan Alawudun of the World Uyghur Congress told RFA the fasting restrictions were "pathetic and tragic."

In October, the human rights NGO *Dui Hua* (Dialogue) reported that Muslim prisoners who were caught performing *namaz* (daily prayers) were at risk of receiving harsh punishment, including possible extensions of their sentences. *Dui Hua* cited the case of Uyghur Ismayil Sidiq, originally sentenced to 10 years in prison of promoting extremism. In 2021, a court added 13 years to his original sentence when guards in Kuitun Prison caught him using what the authorities said was “a disguised and simplified method” of performing daily prayers in the prison dormitory. The court convicted him of “sabotaging prison supervision” and “provoking ethnic hatred.”

In November, a representative of the World Uyghur Congress told RFA that between August and October, authorities fined more than 7,000 Uyghurs in Hotan and Kashgar prefectures for reading the Quran in their homes. According to the NGO, under the pretext of checking for compliance with pandemic protocols, local authorities in Hotan and Kashgar forcibly entered Uyghur homes in locked down neighborhoods to check for “illegal activities” and confiscate “illegally collected” items such as Qurans, other Muslim religious books and periodicals, and prayer rugs. Authorities arrested more than 80 individuals and charged them with using social media to spread illegal religious information during the COVID-19 lockdowns.

In May, the government announced that individuals were still allowed to seek permission to make Hajj pilgrimages but in practice, the government’s continued COVID-19 restrictions made travel for this purpose impossible, as was the case in 2020 and 2021. SARA regulations stating only the Islamic Association of China was permitted to organize Muslims’ pilgrimage trips remained in effect. These regulations stated that those who applied to join the Hajj must be “patriotic, law-abiding, and have good conduct,” must have never participated in the Hajj, and must be in sound physical and mental health. They also must be able to completely pay the costs associated with going on the Hajj and must oppose religious extremism.

The government continued to control the administration of mosques and to restrict access to houses of worship, requiring worshipers to apply for mosque entry permits.

According to human rights groups and international media, in addition to the government's Integrated Joint Operation Plan (IJOP) big data collection program, Xinjiang authorities continued to maintain extensive and invasive security and surveillance, in part to gain information regarding individuals' religious adherence and practices. Human rights groups said surveillance was more severe in parts of the country where religious minorities predominated, including the XUAR, compared with other parts of the country with ethnic Han Chinese majorities, due to the connection between religion and the ethnic and cultural identities of these groups. During the year, the government extensively used mobile phone apps, cameras, and other electronics to monitor all speech and movement. Authorities employed a comprehensive database that tracked the movements, mobile app usage, and even electricity and gasoline consumption of inhabitants in the region.

According to media reports, the Ministry of Public Security used tens of millions of surveillance cameras throughout the country to monitor the general public. Human rights groups stated authorities increasingly relied on the cameras and other forms of surveillance to monitor and intimidate political dissidents, religious leaders and adherents, Tibetans, and Uyghurs. These included facial recognition and "gait recognition" video surveillance, allowing police not only to monitor a situation but also to quickly identify individuals in crowds. In June, Internet Protocol Video Market, a security and technology research group, reported Xinjiang authorities used state-owned technology company Hikvision's facial recognition cameras as part of the IJOP to carry out widespread surveillance against Uyghurs. The report stated that police screened "23 million Xinjiang residents for 'terrorism' with facial recognition and license plate cameras, flagging those with ties overseas for 'immediate arrest.'"

In February, the online newsletter *ChinaFile* reported authorities increasingly relied on technology to operate an "integrated grid management platform," a state-imposed invasive surveillance system to monitor society at the neighborhood level. The report stated authorities believed the population contained "enemies," requiring "constant and draconian" surveillance measures. The report stated the government poured resources into the region's technology companies to improve authorities' ability to monitor every aspect of Xinjiang residents' lives. The *ChinaFile* report concluded, "The party-state has deployed

cutting edge technologies from the research and commercial sectors to fashion an unrivaled system of population monitoring, assessment, and control.”

In September, the *Washington Post* reported that while there were indications authorities closed some reeducation centers in Kashgar and Hotan Prefectures, pervasive surveillance continued. According to the *Post*, “Signs in the backs of taxis remind passengers their conversations are being recorded.” A photograph accompanying the article showed the interior of a taxi where a surveillance camera was prominently mounted to observe the back seat. The article stated, “Outside several mosques, police officers rushed over to demand a *Post* reporter delete photos, saying it was forbidden to publish images of the religious structures. Such a rule does not exist elsewhere in China.”

According to government documents, Han Chinese officials also continued to implement an in-person surveillance system in which teams of six – composed of police or local officials and one Uyghur language speaker – went to each house and compiled information on occupants. Since the program began in 2014, more than 200,000 cadres from all levels of the government were deployed to more than 8,500 villages. The teams reported on “extremist” behavior, such as abstaining from alcohol, fasting during Ramadan, and wearing long beards. They reported on the presence of “undesirable” items, such as Qurans, or occupants’ perceived propensity for “extremist” ideology. The February *ChinaFile* report said government officers were instructed to visit “low threat” households once every two months, “basic households” once a month, “key work households” once every three days, and “key control households” once a day, using “precise positioning, precise personnel selection, and precise assignment of responsibilities.”

According to media and the accounts of Uyghurs living abroad, authorities continued to have more than one million CCP officials from other parts of the country live part-time with local families in Xinjiang, who were required to accept this arrangement. Throughout the year, propaganda signage regarding the “Pair Up and Become a Family” was visible around the region. According to international media, the government instituted these mandatory home stays in 2014 to target agricultural households in southern Xinjiang. The government said

the program was part of efforts to combat “terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism.” The government required families to provide detailed information on their personal lives and political views during the officials’ visits to their homes. A Xinjiang government statement available online in 2018 indicated officials had to inspect the homes in which they were staying for any religious elements or symbols, and the statement instructed officials to confiscate such items if found.

Government demolition of mosques continued under a campaign called “Mosque Rectification” that began in 2016. The OHCHR assessment stated, “Alongside the increasing restrictions on expressions of Muslim religious practice are recurring reports of the destruction of Islamic religious sites, such as mosques, shrines and cemeteries... several researchers, predominantly based on detailed analysis of publicly available satellite imagery, consider that a large number of mosques have been destroyed in XUAR over the last years. This trend has also been reported by investigative journalists who have visited the region and compared satellite images with the current physical conditions of the geographic sites in question.” The OHCHR said the government consistently denied improperly altering or destroying religious sites, saying instead that mosques were “in disrepair and being reconstructed for safety reasons.”

There were reports authorities continued to remove visibly Islamic architectural features from mosques, such as minarets and domes, throughout the region. In May, RFA reported that in recent years, authorities removed the Arabic *shahada* (statement of faith) from the gate of the Noghay Mosque in Urumqi and installed a security checkpoint that required worshippers and visitors to pass through facial recognition scanners before entering. In June, *BuzzFeed* reported authorities had destroyed thousands of mosques in the region, and some former mosques had become cafes and restaurants. Local authorities converted some remaining mosques into more appealing attractions for Han tourists by, for example, removing traditional Islamic architecture, painting over Arabic lettering, installing PRC flags and signs with Party slogans, and displaying photographs of President Xi. This was part of the government’s efforts in recent years to promote the region as a tourist destination. A historian of Islam in China at the University of Manchester in the United Kingdom told *BuzzFeed* the ancient city of Kashgar had become “a theme park.” *BuzzFeed* stated that at the Id Kah Mosque, the main mosque in

Kashgar, attendance at Friday prayers had decreased from 4,000-5,000 in 2011 to just 800.

The government continued to enforce laws prohibiting children younger than 18 from taking part in religious observances and traditions, including fasting during the month of Ramadan and entering mosques. Uyghurs and other Muslim ethnic minorities remained strictly prohibited by law from providing their children with any religious education at home.

Numerous media reports indicated the government continued to operate a network of boarding schools for ethnic minority children whose parents had been detained in Xinjiang's internment camp systems. In February, National Public Radio (NPR) interviewed two Uyghur children who attended government-run boarding schools who said school officials beat children, locked them in dark rooms, forced them into stress positions as punishment for perceived transgressions, and shaved their heads. The children interviewed said the boarding schools also required all students to sing and recite political slogans that praised the CCP. According to NPR, authorities removed documents from government websites that referred to the boarding schools, but a Ministry of Education document indicated authorities had built 1,300 such schools and sent nearly half a million children to them as of 2017. While the PRC claimed that the schools provided children with better educational opportunities, Uyghur families and international experts said the schools were designed to erase Uyghur culture.

In February, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that Abdurahman Tohti's son, mother, and grandmother disappeared after traveling to Xinjiang from Turkey in 2016 when the son was two years old. Tohti remained behind in Turkey. In 2019, Tohti found a video of his son on the social media site *Douyin* in which the boy was shouting pro-PRC and CCP slogans. According to the *Times*, Tohti's son appeared to be in a "state-run institution, one of many 'orphanages' and boarding schools" in the region. One year later, an official located Tohti's son and arranged a telephone call between the two during which Tohti's son said in Mandarin that he had no father.

In 2020, a research study published online on parent-child separation in Yarkand County, Kashgar Prefecture, analyzed data from government spreadsheets not previously available. According to the study, government statistics showed that between 2017 and 2019, the number of boarding students in primary and middle schools (grades one to nine) increased by 76.9 percent, from 497,800 to 880,500. The data indicated that 53.1 percent of all students in Yarkand lived in boarding facilities. Government records showed that among a subset of 10,000 children with at least one parent in custody, there were more than 1,000 children who had both parents interned. Nearly all of the children were Uyghur, apart from 11 who were of Kazakh and Tajik ethnicity. No ethnic Han child had a parent in custody.

In February, a professor and Xinjiang expert at Simon Fraser University in Canada published an essay on the website *The Art of Life in Central Asia* describing the “ethnic extinction” taking place in the region. The professor stated the government increasingly hired ethnic Han teachers to replace Uyghur and other ethnic minority teachers in schools. He wrote, “In order to remain in teaching positions, Uyghurs had to prove they could speak and teach Chinese language with near-native fluency and have spotless family backgrounds. For most Uyghur educators, this was simply impossible.” The professor stated that Uyghur children “across the region are now effectively raised in a non-Muslim, Mandarin-speaking environment.”

In January, the UHRP published a report, *Coerced Kinship: The Pomegranate Flower Plan and the Forced Assimilation of Uyghur Children*. The eponymous plan, launched in September 2021 in Yengisheher County, Kashgar Prefecture, paired 30 Uyghur children with Han children from across the country as “brothers” and “sisters” to engage in cultural exchange. According to the UHRP, however, the exchange was “unidirectional,” with Han children sending Uyghur children items that reflected Han culture. On July 15, state media’s China Central Television (CCTV) reported that during his visit to the region, President Xi said again it was necessary for all ethnic groups to hug each other tightly like pomegranate seeds to forge a firm Chinese heart and soul. The UHRP stated, “We are deeply concerned that the Pomegranate Flower Plan is little more than a vehicle of assimilation and thus a continued violation of Uyghurs’ cultural and linguistic rights as well as rights to family life, unity, and privacy.”

International media and NGOs reported that PRC authorities or their representatives continued to pressure Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and other Muslims and members of ethnic and religious minority groups from Xinjiang living abroad to spy on fellow expatriates. They also reportedly pressured individuals to return to China or cease advocacy on behalf of residents of Xinjiang and threatened retaliation against family members still in Xinjiang if the individuals living overseas did not comply. According to international human rights groups, Xinjiang authorities continued to use “proof of life” videos to pressure overseas Uyghurs into silencing their criticism of abuses taking place in the region. These videos took many different forms, but generally, authorities posted videos of family members in Xinjiang stating they were alive and doing well, free to experience their culture and practice their religion, or denouncing their Uyghur relatives overseas for being critical of the PRC.

RFA reported in May that authorities warned Uyghurs and others in Xinjiang that they “may suffer consequences if their relatives living abroad spoke out about internment camps in the region.” A U.S.-based Uyghur individual reported security officials threatened her mother in Xinjiang, saying, “Your daughter in the United States is speaking out against the government. If you don’t talk to this girl and ask her to agree to delete everything on Twitter, you will be convicted of being a two-faced person [i.e., corrupt or disloyal to the Communist Party] yourself.”

The online newsletter *Coda* reported in February that Rahima Mahmut and Arslan Hidayat, ethnic Uyghurs working overseas as translators for researchers investigating PRC human rights violations in the region, said authorities first attempted to stop them from their activism by threatening their families who still lived in the region. When those efforts failed, authorities forced the Xinjiang-based families to cut ties with Mahmut and Hidayat.

The *Guardian* reported in May that according to Oslo-based Uyghur activists, “close to 100 percent” of the 2,500 Uyghur asylees in Norway faced “surveillance, threats, and censorship” from China. One asylee continued to receive threatening phone calls, even though he lived north of the Arctic Circle. Chinese speakers on those calls told him, “[From] wherever you can see the moon, we can find you.”

The asylee said that after his last time abroad, authorities detained him in China, where they beat and interrogated him about his connections in Europe and pressured him “to infiltrate and spy on Uyghur groups” who were critical of the regime’s human rights violations in the Xinjiang region. Another Uyghur refugee and activist in Norway said Chinese security officials threatened his parents in Xinjiang in 2018 and threatened him in 2019 and 2020, “suggesting ‘maybe I would get in a car accident’ or ‘thieves might come into my house while I was on night shift.’” He said one official offered him money if he would spy on fellow Uyghurs. According to the *Guardian*, the Chinese embassy in Oslo denied allegations that PRC officials persecuted individuals living in Norway. The embassy said it had warned expatriates in Norway about “telephone fraud” committed by callers claiming to represent the PRC government.

International media and NGOs also reported the PRC put pressure on foreign governments to deport Uyghur refugees back to China. In March, the UHRP published a report, *Beyond Silence: Collaboration between Arab States and China in the Transnational Repression of Uyghurs*, which stated the PRC successfully pressured or persuaded at least six Arab governments, primarily Egypt but also Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and the United Arab Emirates, to deport or detain as many as 292 Uyghurs living abroad between 2004 and 2021. According to the report, “China’s transnational repression of Uyghurs in [the Arab world] has been growing in scale and scope as the country’s relations with Arab states have strengthened.” For its findings, the report drew upon China’s Transnational Repression of Uyghurs Database of the UHRP, interviews with witnesses and experts, and analyses of English and Arabic-language source materials, including government documents, human rights reports, and reporting by news agencies. The report said, “China’s Party-state uses five primary mechanisms of transnational repression to target Uyghurs in Arab states: 1) transnational digital surveillance [i.e., the IJOP], which enables them to track and closely monitor Uyghurs living outside their homeland; 2) Global War on Terror narratives, which serve as justification for the detention or rendering of Uyghurs to China; 3) institutions of Islamic education where Uyghur students enroll, which the Party-state targets for crackdowns; 4) the Hajj and Umrah in Saudi Arabia, which they use to surveil or detain Uyghur pilgrims (a trend accelerating with the increasing involvement of Chinese tech companies in Hajj digital services); and 5) denial of

travel documents to Uyghurs in Arab states, rendering them stateless and vulnerable to deportation to the PRC.” China’s embassies and consulates played “a key role in the use of technology as a mechanism for transnational repression.” The UHRP stated individuals who returned from abroad were particularly vulnerable to being arrested or sent to reeducation camps in China.

In March, NBC News reported Saudi Arabia had increasingly cooperated with the government’s requests to return Chinese Uyghurs. In March, the think tank The Wilson Center published a report titled *Great Wall of Steel: China’s Global Campaign to Suppress the Uyghurs*. The report found that Saudi authorities deported at least six Uyghurs to China in the last four years who were either making the Hajj or living in Saudi Arabia legally. RFA reported in April that the PRC sought the refoulement of four Uyghurs held in deportation centers in Saudi Arabia: Nurmemet Rozi, Hamidulla Wali, Abula Buheliquemu, and Buheliquemu’s 13 year-old daughter Miremaiti Baibure. Saudi authorities detained Rozi and Wali in 2020 at the Chinese embassy’s request after they traveled to Mecca from Turkey on pilgrimage, and detained Abula and her daughter on March 31 near Mecca. An Amnesty International researcher told RFA the three adults would likely face detention and torture upon their return to China and the child would be forcibly separated from her mother. The four Uyghurs remained in detention in Saudi Arabia at year’s end. Foreign governments, Amnesty International, other NGOs including the World Uyghur Congress, and legal experts from the United Nations called on the Saudi government in this case to uphold its international commitment not to refool individuals who would face torture, cruel punishment, or persecution upon returning to their home country.

On July 19, HRW reported Turkey-based Uyghur activist Yidiresi Aishan (also known as Idris Hasan) remained in custody in Morocco and under threat of extradition to China. Aishan, originally from Xinjiang, fled to Turkey in 2012 after Chinese authorities increasingly harassed him. In Turkey, he was known for advocating for the rights of Uyghurs in the PRC. According to media reports, Moroccan authorities detained Aishan at the airport in Casablanca after he arrived from Turkey in July 2021 because of a PRC-filed 2017 Interpol red notice identifying him as a “terrorist” that Interpol subsequently cancelled on the grounds that it was “of a political, military, religious, or racial character.” In

December 2021, the Court of Cassation in Rabat issued a favorable opinion on the extradition request. A panel of experts in the OHCHR and international NGOs advocated for Aishan's release, stating that if returned, Aishan "risks serious human rights violations including arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, or torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."

In May, the RFA reported the government increased its efforts to restrict the number of ethnic and religious minority community members and political dissidents living abroad, noting that between 2014 and 2021, the government had repatriated nearly 10,000 persons. The human rights NGO Safeguard Defenders told RFA, "The diversity of the CCP's so-called 'extradition' is something that worries us. For example, the Interpol red notice mechanism is increasingly being abused to persuade other countries to cooperate." The NGO said it was common for Chinese police to call and harass Uyghurs overseas, including in the United States and Europe, and that many were forced to go back when the authorities threatened to detain their loved ones.

Voice of America (VOA) reported in June that attorneys representing Uyghurs living abroad urged the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate China's treatment of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslim populations in the Xinjiang region. The lawyers said they presented the ICC with new evidence of the PRC's efforts to implement "a policy of rounding up Uyghurs and other ethnically Turkic people from outside China, including ICC member states such as neighboring Tajikistan, and forcefully deporting them back to China." The attorneys stated, "The ICC has jurisdiction over these crimes that commence on ICC territory and continue into China and is urged to act immediately to open an investigation." According to VOA, the attorneys' submission to the ICC in June, which included "firsthand evidence from a witness" who was deported to China, detained in internment camps, and subjected to "interrogation and torture" before escaping, followed similar complaints of Uyghur mistreatment submitted to the ICC in 2020 and 2021.

In September, the National Endowment for Democracy published excerpts of interviews that the International Forum for Democratic Studies conducted with international experts on the government's actions against Xinjiang diaspora

groups. The senior director of research at the NGO Freedom House told the forum, “Beijing’s primary tool in its global campaign of transnational repression is bilateral pressure...Transnational repression against Uyghurs as a community is well known and well documented by numerous groups, including the Uyghur Human Rights Project, Safeguard Defenders, and Freedom House.” A University of California Berkeley researcher said, “Countless members of the Uyghur diaspora have also experienced the long reach of the CCP’s authoritarian state in the form of relentless harassment, intimidation, and coercion,” noting this type of repression had increased since 2017.

Advocacy groups, analysts, and media outlets reported that the government continued a sustained propaganda campaign to counter evidence and international criticism of human rights abuses in the region. In February, several human rights organizations and media outlets criticized the government for attempting to “sports-wash” its human rights abuses, citing the selection of Dilnigar Ilhamjan (Dinigeer Yilamujiang), an ethnic Uyghur athlete, to participate in the final leg of the 2022 Winter Olympics torch lighting ceremony. HRW stated, “The choice of a Uyghur was widely seen as the Chinese government’s rebuff of international criticism of its human rights violations in Xinjiang.” Amnesty International told *al Jazeera* the Olympics “should not be used as a distraction from China’s appalling human rights record.” The same month, RFA reported ethnic Uyghur Adil Abdurehim, a 2008 Beijing Olympic torchbearer, was serving a 14- year prison sentence for watching unspecified “counterrevolutionary” videos. According to RFA, Abdurehim had been a member of the CCP and worked for the Culture and Sports Bureau in Urumqi before authorities detained him in 2017.

In August, the information office of the XUAR issued a response to the OHCHR’s assessment titled *Fight against Terrorism and Extremism in Xinjiang: Truth and Facts*. The government stated, “Xinjiang’s fight against terrorism and extremism [was] both necessary and just,” measures were pursued in accordance with the rule of law, and “vocational education and training centers” were “schools intended for de-radicalization established in accordance with the law.” The government stated that the administration of the centers “fully respected trainees’ customs and habits and their right to use their own ethnic languages,

and fully protected trainees' freedom of religious belief and such rights as personal freedom and the freedom of correspondence."

In September, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) spokesperson Wang Wenbin said OHCHR's August Xinjiang assessment was "completely illegal, null, and void." Wang called the assessment "a patchwork of false information that serves as political tools for...Western countries to strategically use Xinjiang to contain China ...It once again shows that the OHCHR has been reduced to an enforcer and accomplice of...Western countries in forcing the developing countries to fall in line with them."

The XUAR government, often cohosting with the MFA, held 15 press conferences during the year to refute international criticism of human rights violations taking place in the region. In a January press conference, XUAR spokesperson Xu Guixiang said, "So-called forced labor in Xinjiang is a completely false proposition. It is a card played by anti-China forces in the United States and the West to meddle in Xinjiang affairs." In an April press conference, scholars and business executives joined Xu in condemning the U.S. Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, with Xu saying the law was "putting on the cloak of 'rule of law' and 'justice' in a plot to suppress Xinjiang and cover up the 'black hand' of the United States' long-armed jurisdiction."

On July 6, ASPI published a report titled *Cultivating Friendly Forces: The Chinese Communist Party's influence operations in the Xinjiang diaspora*. ASPI stated the CCP was "actively monitoring members of the diaspora, including Uyghurs, creating databases of actionable intelligence, and mobilizing community organizations in the diaspora to counter international criticism of its repressive policies in Xinjiang while promoting its own policies and interests abroad." ASPI also said many diaspora community organizations "purported to represent and speak on behalf of 'Xinjiang' and its indigenous peoples," but in reality, "play[ed] important roles in muting alternative and independent voices from the community while amplifying CCP messaging and spreading disinformation." ASPI said these organizations "exploit the openness of democratic and multicultural countries while assisting the CCP and its proxies to surveil and even persecute

members of the Xinjiang diaspora community or individuals who are critical of the CCP's Xinjiang policies.”

July 15, CCTV reported that during his visit to the region, President Xi said party and government cadres should be proficient in Marxist religious views, familiar with religious work, and good at working with religious believers, and that religious leaders should be politically reliable. Xi said it was necessary to firmly unite religious believers around the CCP and the government.

In May, the official XUAR news outlet *Tianshan* reported XUAR chairman Erken Tuniyazi visited “patriotic religious figures” at the Xinjiang Islamic Association and the Yanghang Mosque in Urumqi on the eve of Eid al-Fitr. There, Tuniyazi told his audience that religious leaders in the region must study and implement President Xi’s vision for governing religious practices in the region and adhere to the “Sinicization of Islam in Xinjiang... and actively guide Xinjiang Islam to better adapt to socialist society.”

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Because the government and individuals closely linked religion, culture, and ethnicity, it was difficult to categorize many incidents of societal discrimination as being solely based on religious identity. Local sources continued to state that unequal treatment of Uyghurs and Han Chinese ran parallel with official suppression of Uyghur language, culture, and religion, and the promotion of the Han majority in political, economic, and cultural life. Muslims in Xinjiang continued to face discrimination in hiring, retaining their positions, and pursuing other business opportunities. Local sources continued to state it was difficult for Uyghurs to book hotel reservations for travel.

An international journalist who traveled to the region in September reported manifestations of Uyghur religion and culture were packaged as tourist items for Han Chinese visitors. The journalist described, for example, Han tourists participating in a mock Uyghur wedding.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

During the year, the U.S. government used a variety of diplomatic and economic tools to promote religious freedom and accountability in Xinjiang, including sanctions, visa restrictions, controls on exports and imports, and an updated business advisory raising awareness among U.S.-based companies about the risks of doing business in Xinjiang. The Ambassador and other embassy officials also met with national government officials to advocate for the human rights of Uyghur Muslims and members of other Muslim and non-Muslim minority groups in Xinjiang.

In February, the United States joined several nations in declining to send diplomatic or official representation to the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games due to concerns with what the President's press secretary described as the PRC government's "ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang and other human rights abuses."

During testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on April 6, the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State said the PRC's treatment of ethnic and religious minority groups in Xinjiang was "an ongoing atrocity" that the Secretary and the President had called a genocide. The Deputy Secretary called upon PRC authorities "to immediately release all arbitrarily detained people, abolish the internment camps, cease forced sterilization, end all torture, and stop prosecuting Uyghurs and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups in Xinjiang."

In May, the Secretary of State said of then High Commissioner for Human Rights Bachelet's visit to the Xinjiang region, "We are concerned the conditions Beijing authorities imposed on the visit did not enable a complete and independent assessment of the human rights environment in the PRC, including Xinjiang, where genocide and crimes against humanity are ongoing." On September 1, the Secretary of State issued a statement about the OHCHR's August assessment of the region, noting it outlined "in alarming detail the human rights violations and abuses occurring in Xinjiang." The Secretary said, "This report deepens and reaffirms our grave concern regarding the ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity that PRC government authorities are perpetrating against Uyghurs, who are predominantly Muslim, and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups in Xinjiang."

On June 14, the United States joined a group of 47 countries in issuing a Canada-led joint statement in the UN Human Rights Council condemning human rights abuses in Xinjiang.

The Department of State in August published a report, *PRC Efforts to Manipulate Global Public Opinion on Xinjiang*. The report detailed the PRC's "attempts to manipulate and dominate global discourse on Xinjiang and to discredit independent sources reporting ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity conducted against predominantly Muslim Uyghurs and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region" using misinformation and disinformation. The report also stated the PRC used "digital transnational repression" tools, and deployed trolls to engage in cyberbullying targeting critics, particularly in Chinese diaspora communities, "with on- and offline harassment to prevent them from sharing their stories or to intimidate them into self-censorship." The report said the PRC also used coordinated campaigns of inauthentic social media posts to convey "positive stories" designed to counter negative narratives about Xinjiang.

On October 31, the United States joined a group of 50 countries in issuing a UK-led joint statement at the UN expressing concerns about the human rights situation in Xinjiang, and especially the detention of Uyghurs. The statement read, in part, that the release of the OHCHR assessment "corroborates these concerns in an impartial and objective manner...Such severe and systematic violations of human rights cannot be justified on the basis of counterterrorism...[W]e urge the Government of China to uphold its international human rights obligations and to fully implement the recommendations of the OHCHR assessment. This includes taking prompt steps to release all individuals arbitrarily deprived of their liberty in Xinjiang, and to urgently clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing family members and facilitate safe contact and reunion."

On November 30, the U.S. Secretary of Commerce said, "Our trade and investment with China should reflect our core democratic values. That is why President Biden signed the bipartisan Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act into law, requiring companies to certify that they are not sourcing goods that relied upon forced labor in their production."

The embassy continued to amplify Department of State religious freedom initiatives directly to local audiences through postings to the embassy website and to its Weibo, WeChat, and Twitter accounts. The embassy also posted or retweeted a series of posts concerning repression of religious freedom in Xinjiang. In total, the embassy created 15 unique posts that generated nearly two million views and more than 85,000 engagements. For example, in January, the embassy amplified the Secretary of State's statement criticizing the PRC government for sanctioning members of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. The embassy also highlighted the Secretary of State's speech in May and his comments on Xinjiang. In June and July, the embassy posted several tweets criticizing the PRC government for illegal detentions of Uyghur Muslims and highlighting the implementation of the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act. In August, the embassy also amplified the Department of State's report detailing the PRC government's attempts to manipulate global public opinion on Xinjiang. The embassy released several social media posts about the OHCHR's August assessment across all platforms, including WeChat and Weibo. PRC officials quickly censored the posts, but more than 68,000 individuals were able to view them before they were removed. In November, the embassy highlighted that the President raised concerns about PRC practices in Xinjiang, Tibet, and Hong Kong in his Bali meeting with Xi Jinping. PRC censors quickly removed related posts on WeChat and Weibo.