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2020 Report on International Religious Freedom: China — Xinjiang

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.” The U.S. government estimated that since April 2017, the government has detained more than one million Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, Hui, and 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 law and the regional counter-extremism policy. Some nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and academics estimated the number of individuals detained in internment camps or other facilities was higher. Authorities subjected individuals to forced disappearance, political indoctrination, torture, physical and psychological abuse, including forced sterilization and sexual abuse, forced labor, and prolonged detention without trial because of their religion and ethnicity. There were reports that authorities moved tens of thousands of individuals from their home areas to work elsewhere in the region and the country. One researcher stated that, based on a survey of Chinese academic research and government figures, up to 1.6 million transferred laborers were at risk of being subjected to forced labor. The government continued to cite what it called the “three evils” of “ethnic separatism, religious extremism, and violent terrorism” as its justification for enacting and enforcing restrictions on religious practices of Muslims and non-Muslim religious minorities. During a speech in September, PRC President and CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping said the government’s actions to Sinicize Islam were “totally correct and must carry on for a long time.” In February, new analysis of 311 entries in the “Karakax List,” a set of PRC government documents originally leaked in 2019 that described the systematic targeting and imprisonment of Muslim populations in Karakax (alternate Uyghur spelling: Qaraqash, Mandarin spelling: Moyu) County, Hotan (Hetian) Prefecture, showed that the government recorded the personal details of individuals living in the region and listed reasons for detaining them, including violating the government’s family planning policies. 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 who were arrested or detained, remained unknown. There were reports of individuals dying as a result of injuries sustained during interrogations, medical neglect, and torture. One Uyghur advocacy and aid organization reported that since 2018, authorities have detained at least 518 Uyghur religious figures and imams. PRC government documents, eyewitness accounts, and victims’ statements indicated the government sharply increased the use of forced sterilization and forced birth control to reduce the birthrate among Muslims. Authorities implemented a variety of different methods, including home inspections, to ensure families were not observing religious practices such as praying, and it forced people to consume food and drink during Ramadan. According to government sources and eyewitness accounts, the government encouraged – and in some cases required – neighbors to spy on each other. Other surveillance included behavioral profiling and forcing Uyghurs to accept government officials and CCP members living in their homes. Government documents revealed extensive use of surveillance cameras and security checkpoints in public spaces. In September, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) published a report based on satellite imagery and other sources that estimated that approximately 16,000 mosques in the region (65 percent of the total) had been destroyed, damaged, or desecrated, and a further 30 percent of important Islamic sacred sites had been demolished. Research conducted during the year estimated that by 2019, nearly 900,000 children, including some preschool-aged children, were separated from their families and were living in boarding schools or orphanages, where they studied ethnic Han culture, Mandarin, and CCP ideology. The government sought to forcibly repatriate Uyghur and other Muslim citizens from overseas and detained some of those who returned. The government harassed and threatened Uyghurs living abroad and threatened to retaliate against their families in Xinjiang if they did not spy on the expatriate community, return to Xinjiang, or stop speaking out about relatives in Xinjiang who had been detained or whose whereabouts were unknown.

Unequal treatment of Uyghur Muslims and Han Chinese continued in parallel with the authorities’ suppression of 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. There were reports that some Han Chinese living in Xinjiang described Uyghurs in derogatory terms.

U.S. embassy officials met with national government officials regarding the treatment of Uyghur Muslims and other Muslim and non-Muslim minority groups in Xinjiang. The embassy and consulates general delivered direct messaging about religious freedom in Xinjiang through social media posts and promoted online engagement on the issue of religious freedom for Xinjiang’s ethnic minority Muslim populations. On June 17, President Trump signed

into law the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020, authorizing the imposition of U.S. sanctions, including asset blocking and denial of visas, against individuals responsible for the detention and other human rights abuses of Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang. The act also directed U.S. agencies to take steps to hold accountable PRC officials, or individuals acting on their behalf, who harassed, threatened, or intimidated Uyghurs within the United States. During the year, the Department of Commerce placed one PRC government entity and 19 commercial industries on the “Entity List” for being implicated in human rights violations and abuses committed in China’s repression, mass arbitrary detention, forced labor and high-technology surveillance in Xinjiang, making them subject to specific license requirements for export, re-export, and/or transfer in-country of specific items. On July 1, the Departments of State, the Treasury, Commerce, and Homeland Security issued the Xinjiang Supply Chain Business Advisory to caution businesses about the economic, legal, and reputational risks of supply chain links to entities that engage in human rights abuses, including forced labor in Xinjiang and elsewhere in China. On July 9, the Secretary of State imposed visa sanctions on three senior CCP officials and their families for their involvement in gross violation of human rights in Xinjiang. The Secretary also placed additional visa restrictions on other CCP officials believed to be responsible for, or complicit in, the detention or abuse of Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and members of other minority groups in Xinjiang. Also on July 9, the Department of the Treasury imposed sanctions under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act on one government entity and four current or former government officials in connection with serious rights abuses against ethnic minorities in Xinjiang. On July 31, the Department of the Treasury imposed additional sanctions on the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC) and its current and former senior officials for serious human rights abuses in Xinjiang. On May 1, June 17, and September 14, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agency prohibited imports of specified merchandise produced by eight companies that operated in Xinjiang based on information that reasonably indicated the use of prison labor and forced labor of Uyghurs and other minority groups being held in internment camps. On December 2, CBP announced it would detain all shipments of cotton and cotton products originating from the XPCC because of forced labor concerns. At the direction of the Secretary of State, U.S. government officials explored whether the PRC’s actions in Xinjiang constituted atrocities, namely crimes against humanity and genocide. The process was ongoing at year’s end.

Section I. Religious Demography

A 2018 report on the XUAR issued by the Department of Population and Employment Statistics of the National Bureau of Statistics estimates the total population was 24.87 million. The report states Uyghurs, along with Kazakh, Hui, Kyrgyz, and members of other predominantly Muslim ethnic minority groups constitute approximately 14.9 million residents in Xinjiang, or 60 percent of the total population. According to the BBC, of these, 12 million are Uyghurs. The largest segment of the remaining population is Han Chinese, with additional groups including Mongols, Tibetans, and others. Most Uyghurs are Muslim. The *Globe and Mail* reported in September 2019 that according to sources in the region, 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 also stipulates the right of citizens to believe in or not believe in any religion. The government recognizes five official religions – Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and 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.

In addition to the national counterterrorism law, Xinjiang has its own counterterrorism law and de-extremification laws that went into effect in 2016 and 2017, respectively, containing similar provisions to the national law regarding “religious extremism.” These laws ban the wearing of long beards, full-face coverings, religious dress, expanding halal practice beyond food, 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 an incident the government defines as a terror attack.

Regional regulations passed in 2018 to implement the national counterterrorism law permit the establishment of “vocational skill 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 skill 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.”

Regulations in Xinjiang’s capital, Urumqi, prohibit veils that cover the face, homeschooling children, and “abnormal beards.” A separate regulation bans the practice of religion in government buildings and the wearing of clothes associated with “religious extremism.” Neither “abnormal” nor “religious extremism” are defined in law. Similar regulations are in effect in other parts of Xinjiang.

Authorities in the XUAR have defined 26 religious activities, including some practices of Islam, Christianity, and Tibetan Buddhism, as illegal without 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 is permitted to 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 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 in effect since 2016 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 Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency Law states children affected by ethnic separatism, extremism and terrorism, and/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 school.

GOVERNMENT PRACTICES

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. Police raids and the government’s restrictions on Islamic practices, carried out as part of “strike hard” campaigns, the latest iteration of which began in 2014, continued throughout the year. Local observers said 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.

According to Radio Free Asia (RFA), during a speech at the September 25-26 Xinjiang Central Work Forum, President Xi said the government’s strategy and policies in Xinjiang were “totally correct and must carry on for a long time.” He also said, “We must also continue the direction of Sinicizing Islam to achieve the healthy development of religion,” and he stated the government’s policies brought stability and economic growth to the region.

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 of them 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 higher. The government continued to use detentions to implement a XUAR-specific counterextremism policy that identifies “extremist” behaviors (including growing beards, wearing headscarves, and abstaining from alcohol) in concert with the National Counterterrorism Law, which contains provisions on “religious extremism.”

In September, researchers at ASPI’s International Cyber Policy Centre published the Xinjiang Data Project, an online database that used satellite imagery, Chinese government documents, official statistics, and other sources to document human rights abuses in the region. The project located, mapped, and analyzed suspected detention facilities. According to the data, the government built or expanded 381 detention centers between 2017 and 2020, including at least 61 facilities that were built or expanded between July 2019 and July 2020. Based on satellite imagery analysis of security features including high perimeter walls, watchtowers, internal fencing, and other features and usage patterns, analysts concluded 108 were low security facilities, 94 were medium security facilities, 72 were high security facilities, and 107 were maximum security facilities.

In a press release about the launch of the Xinjiang Data Project, ASPI stated, “The findings of this research contradict Chinese officials’ claims that all ‘re-education camp’ detainees had ‘graduated’ in December 2019. It presents satellite imagery evidence that shows newly constructed detention facilities, along with growth in several existing facilities, that has occurred across 2019 and 2020.”

The *Washington Post* reported in September that one new facility that had opened “as recently as January” in Kashgar (Kashi) City, Kashgar Prefecture, was a 60-acre compound, with 45-foot-high walls and guard towers and 13 five-story residential buildings that could house more than 10,000 individuals. According to the *Washington Post*, at least 14 new facilities were under construction during the year. In November, RFA reported police officers from Uchturpan (Wushi) County, Aksu (Akesu) Prefecture, said that at least three camps were still in operation in the county and estimated that together they likely held more than 20,000 detainees, nearly 10 percent of the county’s population.

On November 16 and November 24, 2019, the *New York Times* (NYT) reported on the leak of 403 pages of purported internal government and CCP documents describing the government’s mass internment program in Xinjiang; these leaked documents were later called “The Xinjiang Papers.” NYT was one of 17 media outlets to partner with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) regarding release of the leaked documents. Also in November 2019, the ICIJ reported on an additional 24 leaked government and CCP documents, later referred to as the “China Cables.” The leaked documents obtained by the ICIJ included a CCP manual, called a “telegram,” for operating internment camps, which it referred to as “vocational skill education training centers.”

According to the ICIJ, this manual “instructs camp personnel on such matters as how to prevent escapes, how to maintain total secrecy about the camps’ existence, methods of forced indoctrination, how to control disease outbreaks, and when to let detainees see relatives or even use the toilet.”

On February 17, the ICIJ, human rights NGOs, and international media provided additional analysis of the “Karakax List” (also referred to as the “Karakax Document,” “Qaraqash Document,” or “Qaraqash List”) that was originally made public in November 2019. The list contained the personal details of 311 individuals being held in camps in Karakax County, Hotan Prefecture, as well as official determinations on whether they could have contact with their families and the grounds upon which they could be released. Reasons for detention included wearing a veil, having a wife who wore a veil, growing a beard, having a household with “a dense religious atmosphere,” applying for a passport, obtaining a passport but not leaving the country, visiting a foreign website, and being related to a person living outside China. The number one reason for imprisonment was violating the government’s family planning policies. Authorities sentenced one man to five years for having a beard and organizing religious study groups. CNN stated it had independently corroborated the details of eight families mentioned in the document.

CNN reported that in a press conference on February 22 in Urumqi, Mehmurtjan Umarjan, governor of Karakax County, Hotan Prefecture, said “after careful investigation,” many of the residents mentioned in the Karakax List had never been in the camps. At the press conference, a Uyghur man told reporters he had been to a “training center” but it had been “for his own good.” In a video released by state broadcaster CCTV, the man said, “My mind used to be filled with religious extremist thinking. Not only did I not earn a living for my family, but I also prohibited my wife from doing so, because I believed it was against Muslim practices for women to earn money. At the center, I learned to speak Mandarin and [learned] about national laws and regulations. I also got lessons in business management.”

The *Economist* reported in 2018 that authorities used detailed information to rank citizens’ “trustworthiness” using various criteria. According to the *Economist*, “The catalogue is explicitly racist: people are suspected merely on account of their ethnicity.” Being labelled “untrustworthy” could lead to being detained by authorities. Officials deemed individuals as trustworthy, average, or untrustworthy depending on how they fit into the following categories: aged 15 to 55 years old (i.e., of military age); of Uyghur ethnicity; unemployed; possessed religious knowledge; prayed five times a day; had a passport; had ever overstayed a visa; wore religious clothing or had long beards; had family members living abroad; homeschooled their children (which was prohibited throughout the country); or had visited one of the “sensitive countries.” According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), the 26 “sensitive countries” were Afghanistan, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Libya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, and Yemen.

In December, HRW reported what it called the “Aksu List,” a leaked list, dated 2018, of more than 2,000 detainees from Aksu Prefecture that the government had identified through its “predictive policing program based on big-data analysis,” called the Integrated Joint Operations Platform (IJOP), which collects a variety of personal information on the lives and movements of individuals. According to HRW, “The Aksu List provides further insights into how China’s brutal repression of Xinjiang’s Turkic Muslims is being turbocharged by technology.” According to HRW, the Aksu List showed authorities consider behaviors that included certain Islamic traditions to be suspicious, such as: studying, reciting, or preaching the Quran without state permission; wearing religious clothing or having a beard; having children in excess of the government’s family planning policy; “marrying through a *nikah* (an Islamic law marriage contract), or practicing polygamy”; going on the Hajj; and “performing the Hijra, a form of migration to escape religious persecution.” HRW stated the list indicated that in at least one case, authorities in 2019 detained a woman, identified as “Ms. T,” whose sister lived in one of the “sensitive countries.” Ms. T’s sister told HRW that upon her release, Ms. T was forced to work in a factory five days a week against her will and was allowed to go home only on weekends.

There were 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 in 2020. 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.

In February, when COVID-19 was spreading throughout the country, a report from the Australian outlet *SBS News* that included interviews with Uyghur refugees stated that in the camps, “Access to hospitals, quarantine areas, food, and hygiene products is severely restricted, according to human rights organizations and former detainees. Showers are rare and monitored; washing your hands or feet is considered a Muslim ablution, and therefore very controlled.” Munawwar Abdulla, cofounder of the Uyghur diaspora organization Tarim Network, told *SBS News*, “Each camp holds thousands of inmates in highly unsanitary conditions. There are also reports of sexual abuse, lack of medical care, neglect, psychological stress, and injections of unknown substances; these all create ripe conditions for a virus to spread.”

In October, RFA reported that Qelbinur Sidik, a former Mandarin-language instructor at two internment camps who subsequently left China, described harsh conditions at one camp holding approximately 3,000 men and a second camp holding approximately 10,000 women in Urumqi. She said at the men’s camp, the prisoners were rushed under unreasonable time constraints to use the bathroom, which had only one toilet, and to wash their hands and faces. They did not have access to shower facilities. She said that the men’s camp also had an underground interrogation room, and that at times she could hear screams coming from this room. Sidik also said she heard of one case in

which a man was “very badly hurt in the process of interrogation” and that he later died of his injuries. At the women’s camp, there were more than 50 women in each cell, and they were not provided with appropriate privacy – only a partial wooden partition separated a bucket that was used as a toilet from the living space in the cell. There was a communal shower that each woman could use for 10 minutes once per month.

In August, the BBC reported that Uyghur fashion model Merdan Ghappar sent a video of himself in a cell in a detention center. There were bars on the windows, and one of Ghappar’s hands was handcuffed to the metal frame of a bed. Accompanying the video, Ghappar sent a series of text messages in which he described 18 days spent shackled and hooded in a jail with more than 50 other Uyghurs in Kuchar (Kuche) City, Aksu Prefecture. He said he was later moved to his own cell after showing signs of being ill and was given access to his phone. Relatives said authorities forcibly transported Ghappar back to Xinjiang in January after he completed a 16-month sentence for a drug offense in Foshan City, Guangdong Province, where he had been living and working. In August, Ghappar’s uncle told RFA that Ghappar and his aunt, who sent the video out of the country, had both disappeared and their whereabouts were unknown at year’s end.

In October, Zumrat Dawut, a Uyghur woman living in exile who spent two months in an internment camp, told the *Economist* that during her time there, every day the female inmates would gather in a classroom to study “Xi Jinping Thought.” As they left, guards would ask them, “Is there a God?” If an inmate answered “yes,” she would be beaten. According to Dawut, guards would then ask if there was a Xi Jinping, and say, “Your God cannot get you out of here, but Xi Jinping has done so much for you.”

According to *Bitter Winter*, an online publication that tracks religious liberty and human rights abuses in China, on June 13, the People’s Court in Korla City, Bayingolin (Bayinguoleng) Mongol Autonomous Prefecture sentenced 18 Jehovah’s Witnesses to imprisonment, with sentences ranging from two and a half years to six and a half years and a 30,000 renminbi (RMB) (\$4,600) fine for “using or organizing a cult to undermine implementation of the law.” According to *Bitter Winter*, this was the first case of using Article 300 of the criminal code, which covers “cult” offenses, against Jehovah’s Witnesses. According to a report by Wei quanwang, a Chinese blog that reports on human rights abuses in the country, most of the 18 Jehovah’s Witnesses were subject to physical punishment and mistreatment while in detention, and one of them attempted suicide.

According to CNN, shortly after former Xinjiang resident Yerzhan Kurman, an ethnic Kazakh who moved to Kazakhstan with his family in 2015, returned to Xinjiang to visit his mother in 2018, authorities placed him in a “political educational school.” Speaking to CNN in October, Kurman said authorities placed him in a cell with nine other men, with whom he shared a bucket as a toilet. Police continuously monitored them via cameras, did not allow them to talk to each other, and required them to ask permission to use the bucket. If they disobeyed the rules, police punished them by making them stand upright all night or by denying them food.

In October, a former Xinjiang resident, an ethnic Kazakh living in exile, said authorities placed her in a camp in 2017 when she returned to Xinjiang from visiting her family in Kazakhstan. She said cameras monitored her every movement. According to the former detainee, “If we cried, they would handcuff us, if we moved, they would also handcuff us... They would allow us to go to the toilet for two minutes only. If anyone exceeded that time, they would hit us with electric sticks.” She also stated that authorities cut her hair and took blood samples.

In August, the German media outlet *Deutsche Welle* reported that Sayragul Sauytbay, an ethnic Kazakh born in Ili Kazakh (Yili Kasake) Autonomous Prefecture and a former camp detainee, said she was aware of “reports of mass rapes, mock trials, suspected drug experiments – and a ‘black room’ where she was imprisoned.” Sauytbay said authorities tortured detainees in an electric chair in the “black room,” and that she said personally had experienced this.

In January, sources told RFA that in 2018 authorities jailed Ekber Imin, a Uyghur businessman who ran a real estate firm based in Urumqi, his two brothers, Memetturdi Imin and Memetjan Imin, and 20 employees, including company drivers, on charges that included “extremism.” A police officer in Hotan Prefecture told RFA that one of the crimes of which Ekber Imin was convicted was “propagating extremist ideology by incorporating ethnic and religious elements into building designs.” A source from the prefectural legal and political bureau said Ekber Imin had been sentenced to 25 years in prison, while a Hotan City police officer said he had been sentenced to life imprisonment.

In January, RFA reported that the niece of Abidin Ayup, a 90-year-old Uyghur imam of the Qayraq Mosque in Atush (Atushi) City, Kizilsu Kirghiz (Keleisu Keerkezi) Autonomous Prefecture, learned that authorities had arrested her uncle in 2017 for “religious extremism.” She said since his being taken into custody, Ayup’s condition was unknown. Ayup’s family only became aware of his arrest after a CCP official, Song Kaicai, was charged with corruption and criminal negligence after he permitted Ayup to visit a hospital to treat an illness he experienced while being incarcerated. Ayup’s niece told RFA, “It appeared that [my uncle] got sick around May of [2017] and was taken to the Atush City Hospital.” Song reportedly gave permission for Ayup’s sons and other relatives to visit him in the hospital. Song was later arrested for taking bribes.

In August, *Buzzfeed News* interviewed multiple ethnic Kazakhs born in China and living in Kazakhstan about their experiences in internment camps. Former inmates said that “vocational training” consisted of being taught Mandarin and CCP ideology and working in factories without pay. In the classrooms, the teacher at the front was separated from the detainees by a transparent wall or a set of bars. Guards flanked the classroom, and some former detainees said they carried batons and even hit “pupils” when they made mistakes about Chinese characters.

In August, *Buzzfeed News* reported that authorities first detained Dina Nurdybai, an ethnic Kazakh who ran a clothing manufacturing business, on October 14, 2017. Nurdybai was moved between five different camps, ranging from a compound in a village to a high security prison. She told the media outlet that in the first camp, “It seemed like 50 new people were coming in every night. You could hear the shackles on their legs.” After some time, authorities told her she had been detained for downloading WhatsApp – which authorities described as “illegal software” – to her mobile phone.

Human rights groups reported that at year’s end, the whereabouts and welfare of Tashpolat Tiyp, former president of Xinjiang University, remained unknown, following his disappearance in 2017. International media reported in 2018 that Tiyp had been sentenced to death, with the sentence suspended for two years. On April 20, Amnesty International wrote on its website, “While Chinese authorities have since indicated that he is being tried on corruption charges, his current condition and whereabouts remain unknown. Without any official information about the charges and proceedings against him, there are grave fears for Tashpolat Tiyp’s future.”

Human rights groups reported the whereabouts of Rahile Dawut, a prominent professor at Xinjiang University who disappeared in December 2017, remained unknown. The Open Society University Network marked the third anniversary of her disappearance by naming Dawut an Honorary Professor in Humanities. Prior to her disappearance, Dawut had told a relative that she planned to travel from Urumqi to Beijing. Scholars at Risk, an international network of institutions and individuals whose mission is to protect scholars and promote academic freedom, awarded Dawut its Courage to Think Award for 2020. The organization recognized Dawut “for her own work, as well as that of all the scholars and students of the [XUAR], who together struggle for academic freedom and freedom of opinion, expression, belief, association, and movement.”

Human rights groups and family members reported in December that authorities sentenced Gulshan Abbas, a Uyghur doctor missing since September 2018, to 20 years in prison on terrorism-related charges. The sentence had been issued in March 2019 following a secret trial, but Abbas’ family only learned of the sentence in December 2020. On September 25, at a virtual event at the UN General Assembly hosted by the U.S. Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, Ziba Murat, the daughter of Dr. Abbas, said, “Innocent people are being abducted, and my mother, Dr. Gulshan Abbas, a Uyghur retired medical doctor, was not spared from this tragedy, and as of now has been in a concentration camp for the past two years...I am trying every moment of my day to receive news about my mother, to fight to free her. Every day I’m left wondering where she is being held, if her delicate health is being taken care of, if she is mentally strong without a contact for two years...I would not wish this pain on my worst enemy and I cannot bear it any longer.”

RFA reported in March that authorities sentenced Rashida Dawut, a well-known Uyghur singer who had been missing since 2018, to 15 years in prison in late 2019, reportedly on “separatism” charges. Although the sentencing took place in 2019, RFA and Dawut’s family only learned of it (from multiple sources) in March 2020.

In March, *National Public Radio* (NPR) reported that a Uyghur woman living in exile in Turkey said she and her daughter fled Xinjiang in 2016 while she was pregnant with her fifth child. Her husband and three other children planned to follow but went missing in Xinjiang in January 2017 after her husband sent her money in Turkey. She subsequently heard that police arrested him on the charge of “investing in terrorism.” The woman said she did not know the whereabouts of her three children, but that she heard they were taken to Chinese military-style schools surrounded by barbed wire.

In October, *Voice of America* (VOA) reported on several cases of Uyghur individuals living outside the country who were directly contacted by Chinese officials or learned through foreign missions, UN working groups, or Chinese government press conferences that authorities had imprisoned their missing family members in the XUAR. Abdurehim Gheni, a Uyghur man living in Netherlands, had not heard from his family since 2017. The Chinese embassy in the Netherlands conveyed to Gheni a letter via the Dutch Foreign Ministry, received on September 29 according to RFA, that stated two of his brothers, a niece, and two brothers-in-law had been sentenced to prison terms ranging from three to 16 years for such crimes as disturbing social order. Nursiman Abdureshid, a human rights activist living in Turkey, had not heard from her family since 2017, according to VOA. In July, the Chinese embassy in Ankara called to inform her that her parents and two brothers had been imprisoned for “terrorism,” and that their sentences ranged from 13 to 16 years in prison. A Uyghur woman living in Europe, who asked to remain anonymous, said she received a video call from a Chinese official on WeChat, a Chinese social media platform, informing her that her parents, who disappeared in 2018, had been sentenced to more than 10 years in prison on unspecified charges.

RFA reported that in March, authorities detained Subhi Mevlan, an ethnic Uyghur cosmetics shop owner and amateur singer from Ghulja (Yining) City, Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, purportedly for watching a Turkish television show about the Ottoman Empire. According to RFA, “References to the Ottoman Empire are associated in Beijing with ideas of ‘separatism’ and opposition to its rule in the region.” Mevlan, his mother, and his sister were detained after authorities searched Mevlan’s house and found a recording of the television show. Authorities released Mevlan’s mother and sister 15 days later, but Mevlan remained in detention. Six months after taking Mevlan into custody, authorities came to the house to pick up his clothes. At year’s end his whereabouts were unknown.

There were multiple reports that women were sexually assaulted in internment camps. In October, RFA reported that Qelbinur Sidik, who formerly taught Mandarin to inmates in men’s and women’s detention centers, said that one female camp officer told her, “The police officers would take groups of four or five girls in for interrogation and take turns with them.”

In March, *Bitter Winter* reported on several members of The Church of Almighty God (CAG) living in Xinjiang who said authorities imprisoned and tortured them in internment camps. One church member said that after she refused to sign statements saying she would abandon her religious beliefs guards beat her, put a hood over her head, and handcuffed her to a chair for three days. She said that at one point female guards forcibly stripped her of her clothes to bathe her and she narrowly avoided being sexually assaulted by a male guard. Another CAG member held in a camp said she attended indoctrination classes every day and was told to sign statements saying she would abandon her religious beliefs. Authorities punished those who did not sign these statements, including by forcing them to stand still for long periods of time for several days in a row and by rationing their food.

According to media, authorities continued to have more than one million CCP officials from other parts of the country live part-time with local families. According to a 2018 CNN report, the government instituted these home stays (the “Pair Up and Become a Family” program) 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. Live-in officials also subjected families to political indoctrination. In October, the *Economist* reported that Han “relatives” sometimes stayed with Uyghur families for up to 10 days every month.

In September, *Bitter Winter* reported on sexual assaults that occurred in Uyghur homes as a result of the “Pair Up and Become a Family” program. Speaking of her experience, Qelbinur Sidik said Uyghur families “were asked to ‘live together, cook together, eat together, learn together, sleep together’ with Han cadres assigned by the local government. Women must have a male Han cadre ‘relative,’ and men must have a Han female ‘relative.’” According to Sidik, “We had no option but to accept the arrangements, and no right to object.” Sidik said her family was assigned her husband’s boss and his wife as “relatives,” but the wife stopped visiting. The man repeatedly made lewd and suggestive comments to Sidik’s husband about her and “playful” advances to her, which gradually progressed to sexual molestation. Sidik said Han male “relatives” bragged about sexually abusing young women and girls. “How could [the girls] resist? Their fathers, brothers, and mothers were all in camps. They were powerless to repel the men and were terrified themselves of being taken away.” Zumrat Dawut told the *Economist* her 10-year-old daughter was assigned a 20-year-old man as “kin,” a relationship that made Dawut extremely uncomfortable.

In June, VOA reported that according to Uyghur Hjelp, a Norwegian-based Uyghur advocacy and aid organization, since 2018, authorities detained at least 518 Uyghur religious figures and imams. In October 2019, NPR reported that according to family members, courts handed down prison sentences of up to 20 years to religious students, imams, or persons who prayed regularly. Imam Abdurkerim Memet from Yengisar County, Kashgar City was sentenced to 10 years in prison in 2017, according to his daughter, who only learned of his whereabouts in 2020.

In November, RFA reported that according to Abduweli Ayup, a fellow at the International Cities of Refuge Network, XUAR authorities arrested and detained in camps at least 613 imams between early 2017 and June 2020. He said that in interviews with Uyghurs, they told him Uyghurs in Xinjiang were afraid to die because there would be no one to oversee their funeral rites. One academic said authorities also targeted female religious leaders who traditionally officiated at the funerals of women, taught children to recite the Quran, and conducted other rituals within the home.

On June 8, *Deutsche Welle* reported that it conducted separate interviews with four former detainees. The former detainees said that after they had been held under arrest for several months in 2017 and 2018, authorities handed them a list of 70 crimes and forced them to pick one or more from the list, after which they were then convicted of these crimes in sham trials devoid of due process. According to the former detainees, most of the “crimes” on the list were religious acts, such as praying or wearing headscarves.

In February, the Associated Press (AP) reported that information from the Karakax List indicated authorities detained Uyghur Memtimin Emer, a former imam in his 80s, and his three sons in 2017 and sentenced Emer to up to 12 years in prison on charges of “stirring up terrorism,” acting as an unauthorized “wild” imam, following Wahabbism, and conducting illegal religious teaching. One of Emer’s former students told AP that Emer practiced a moderate Central Asian form of Islam and had stopped preaching and teaching in 1997. The Karakax List indicted that in 2017, Emer’s sons were held in detention for having too many children, trying to travel abroad, being “untrustworthy,” being “infected with religious extremism,” and going on the Hajj.

In April, RFA reported on several cases that came to light during the year in which Uyghurs were given long prison sentences. In 2019, taxi driver Shireli Memtili received a 16-and-a-half-year sentence for “illegally gathering and disturbing the social order,” “endangering national security,” receiving “illegal religious education,” and driving an “illegal” religious figure, which RFA stated likely meant an unlicensed imam. Abduhaliq Aziz, a Uyghur studying in Egypt, told RFA he learned in February that his mother, who disappeared in 2017, had been sentenced to six years in prison. Aziz said he had no news of his father, who disappeared in 2016. Aziz said she was likely sentenced for sending him to study abroad to study Islam. According to Aziz, “The fact that they sent me money [while I was abroad] is also a possible reason.”

RFA reported in November that Kastar Polat, an ethnic Kazakh from Chaghantoqay (Yumin) County, Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, was sentenced to 15 years in prison and fined RMB 30,000 (\$4,600) for “promoting religious extremism.” Polat, a locally well-known wrestler, was detained in 2019 for posting a song by Kazakh singer Didar Kamiev on his social media page. According to sources quoted in the RFA report, the song Polat posted did not “directly challenge” Chinese authorities, but instead encouraged people to “preserve the traditions and culture of the Kazakh people.” Polat’s family received a written notification of his sentencing in August.

In May, Amnesty International reported that Ekpas Asat, a Uyghur journalist and entrepreneur who founded the popular Uyghur-language website Baghdax.com, was convicted of “inciting ethnic hatred and ethnic discrimination” and sentenced to 15 years in prison. Public security officers in Xinjiang first detained Asat in April 2016 after he returned from a U.S. Department of State-sponsored leadership program in the United States. He was among a group of six Uyghur webmasters and writers detained between March and May of that year.

In November, NPR reported that authorities sometimes forced Muslims who were registered in Xinjiang but residing elsewhere in China to return to Xinjiang. A source told NPR that in December 2019, authorities sent one Hui Muslim woman who taught at a religious school in a mosque located outside Xinjiang, together with her infant child, back to her hometown of Tacheng City, Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, where she was questioned and received a seven-year prison sentence. The woman had previously completed theological studies at a university in Egypt. The source stated he did not know the crime for which the woman had been convicted.

According to *Bitter Winter*, on June 9, authorities sentenced Jiang Yanghua, a CAG member in Aksu City, to 15 years in prison and a fine of RMB 100,000 (\$15,300) for “using or organizing a cult to undermine implementation of the law.” The court determined that she kept CAG e-books, videos, and audio recordings in her home and allowed other CAG members to gather there.

RFA reported that officials threatened to take residents to internment camps as a means of enforcing COVID-19 quarantine restrictions. When Kashgar underwent lockdown in July, residents reported to RFA that authorities posted police and placed barricades on every corner and cautioned that “whoever leaps over [the barricades] will be taken for ‘re-education.’”

In March, ASPI published a report, *‘Re-education’, forced labour and surveillance beyond Xinjiang*, stating that authorities facilitated the mass transfer of more than 80,000 Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities from the region to factories across the country between 2017 and 2019, and that some of them were sent directly from detention camps. ASPI stated, “The estimated figure is conservative and the actual figure is likely to be far higher.” One independent researcher stated that, based on a survey of Chinese academic research and government figures, up to 1.6 million transferred laborers were at risk of being subjected to forced labor.

In its detailed analysis of the Karakax List, the Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP) stated that some entries indicated the individual had “found employment.” According to the UHRP, “The term used, *jiuye* can have the innocuous meaning of simply getting a job, but it is also associated with China’s longstanding ‘re-education through labor’ or *laogai* system, describing people being released from a re-education camp or prison into a factory or other facility where they work with little or no pay and remain under state monitoring and control.” UHRP stated the document, coupled with other official media, indicated some individuals worked in factories located within detention camps.

Satellite imagery analyzed by ASPI’s Xinjiang Data Project appeared to indicate factories were located within medium-security detention facilities. In its September report, entitled *Documenting Xinjiang’s Detention System*, ASPI stated, “There is evidence that detainees ‘released’ from these camps have gone into either forced labour assignments or strictly controlled residential surveillance.” In November, RFA reported that satellite imagery provided to it by Bahtiya Omar of the Norway-based Uyghur Transitional Justice Database showed that factories were constructed adjacent to detention camps outside Aksu City between 2017 and 2019. Omar told RFA that the images were “irrefutable proof” that “China’s camp policies have been combined with forced labor from 2018 onward.”

In September, media reported that the government released a white paper, entitled *Employment and Labor Rights in Xinjiang*, that stated the government had provided “vocational training” for an average of 1.29 million persons in the region each year from 2014 to 2019. The paper said the government carried out this program to educate the workforce and combat poverty. One academic speculated the government may have released the paper in response to the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, which was under consideration in the U.S. Congress at the time.

In February, RFA reported that authorities sent hundreds of Uyghurs to other parts of China to work in factories affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. At that time, millions of people throughout the country were in quarantine under government orders. Dolkun Isa, President of the World Uyghur Congress (WUC) based in Munich, Germany, said, “It is clear that the Chinese government is placing these Uyghurs in harm’s way because Uyghur lives don’t matter to China.” A Uyghur researcher based in the U.S. said, “China is sending Uyghurs because they have no means to oppose the authorities, they can be forced to work as cheap labor, and the companies that employ them won’t be held accountable, even if they get sick or die due to the coronavirus.”

In December, the Newlines Institute for Strategic Policy released a report indicating that in 2018 in Aksu, Hotan, and Kashgar Prefectures, at least 570,000 persons were mobilized involuntarily to work in cotton-picking operations, according to official government figures. The report stated the actual number of laborers could be higher by several hundred thousand.

During the year, academic studies and media investigations indicated that authorities administered unknown drugs and injections to women in detention, forcibly implanted intrauterine contraceptive devices (IUDs) prior to and during internment, coerced women to accept abortion and surgical sterilization, and used internment as punishment for birth control violations. Multiple eyewitness and victims’ accounts supported these findings. In an AP investigative report published on June 29, a U.S.-based academic stated said the intention “may not be to fully eliminate” the Uyghur population, “but it will sharply diminish their vitality. It will make them easier to assimilate into the mainstream Chinese population.” In an academic paper, a United Kingdom-based scholar stated, “It’s not immediate, shocking, mass-killing, on-the-spot-type genocide, but it’s slow, painful, creeping genocide.” According to the scholar, the aggressive birth control measures were a “direct means of genetically reducing” the Uyghur population.

On July 21, the Jamestown Foundation released a report, *Sterilizations, IUDs, and Coercive Birth Prevention: The CCP’s Campaign to Suppress Uyghur Birth Rates in Xinjiang*, based on further analysis of the Karakax List, government statistics, and other documents. According to the report, natural population growth in Xinjiang’s minority regions began declining dramatically in 2017. Growth rates fell by 84 percent in the two largest Uyghur prefectures between 2015 and 2018 and declined further in several minority regions in 2019. In 2020, one Uyghur region set a near-zero birth rate target of 1.05 per million. The report stated, “This was intended to be achieved through ‘family planning work.’” It cited Chinese academic articles linking “religious extremism” to birth rates in Xinjiang, including one article that said, “It is undeniable that the wave of extremist religious thinking has fueled a resurgence in birth rates in Xinjiang’s southern regions with concentrated Uyghur populations.”

According to the Jamestown Foundation report, government documents “bluntly mandate that birth control violations are punishable by extrajudicial internment in ‘training’ camps. This confirms evidence from the leaked ‘Karakax List’ document, wherein such violations were the most common reason for internment....” The report stated government documents from 2019 laid out plans to sterilize 14 percent of all married women of childbearing age in one primarily Uyghur county and 34 percent in another during that year. The project continued in 2020 with increased funding. The report concluded that the campaign “likely aims to sterilize rural minority women with three or more children as well as some with two children – equivalent to at least 20 percent of all childbearing-age women.” Government documents show that in 2019, authorities planned to insert IUDs or sterilize 80 percent of women of childbearing age in four minority prefectures in southern Xinjiang. According to the report, “In 2018, 80 percent of all net added IUD placements in China (calculated as placements minus removals) were performed in Xinjiang, despite the fact that the region only makes up 1.8 percent of the nation’s population.”

According to the government-affiliated media outlet *ECNS*, in response to the Jamestown Foundation report, Xinjiang Health Commission Director Mutalif Roz said in an August press conference that authorities in Xinjiang had applied the same family planning restrictions on ethnic Han and all ethnic minorities in the region since 2018. Roz said the government’s family planning policy had historically permitted Uyghurs to have more children than Han Chinese, but in 2017 the same restrictions were placed on all ethnic groups: Couples in urban areas could have two children, while couples in rural areas could have three. *ECNS* reported that Tursunay Abdurehim, an official from Xinjiang’s Bureau of Statistics, said the Jamestown Foundation report was biased, used incorrect data, and cited fake cases.

On June 29, AP released an article based on its investigation of government statistics, state documents, and interviews with 30 ex-detainees, family members, and a former detention camp instructor. AP stated the government “is taking draconian measures to slash birth rates among Uyghurs and other minorities as part of a sweeping campaign to curb its Muslim population, even as it encourages some of the country’s Han majority to have more children.” AP stated, “The campaign over the past four years in the far west region of Xinjiang is leading to what some experts are calling a form of ‘demographic genocide.’” The AP reported PRC government statistics showed birth rates in Hotan and Kashgar fell by more than 60 percent from 2015 to 2018, the latest year government statistics were available. Across the XUAR, birth rates fell by 24 percent in 2019, compared with 4.2 percent nationwide. According to AP, “The state regularly subjects minority women to pregnancy checks, and forces intrauterine devices, sterilization and even abortion on hundreds of thousands...Even while the use of IUDs and sterilization has fallen nationwide, it is rising sharply in Xinjiang.” AP reported that authorities threatened to detain women who did not comply, and parents with three or more children were often detained in camps or fined. Former detainees said authorities also detained doctors and medical students who helped Uyghur women give birth at home to evade the birth control policies. On June 29, PRC Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian, when asked about the AP article, said, “Everyone, regardless of whether they’re an ethnic minority or Han Chinese, must follow and act in accordance with the law.”

In the same article published in June, AP reported, “The parents of three or more [children are] ripped away from their families unless they can pay huge fines. Police raid homes, terrifying parents as they search for hidden children.” According to government notices obtained by AP, authorities offered rewards to individuals who reported “illegal” births. Gulnar Omirzakh, an ethnic Kazakh, told AP that in 2016 authorities forced her to get an IUD and threatened to detain her if she did not pay a large fine for giving birth to her third child. In January 2018, four officials in military camouflage came to her home and told Omirzakh she had to pay a fine equivalent to \$2,685 for having more than two children. The officials threatened to send her husband to a labor camp if she did not pay.

In its June article, AP also reported that a former detainee named Tursunay Ziyawudun said that during her internment, authorities injected her with drugs until she stopped menstruating and repeatedly kicked her in her lower stomach during interrogations. She said as a result, she was no longer able to have children and still sometimes doubled over in pain and bled. Ziyawudun said authorities forced her and the 40 other women in her “class” to attend weekly family planning lectures. She said married women were rewarded for good behavior with conjugal visits from their husbands, but only on condition that they took birth control pills beforehand.

The *Financial Times* reported that the Karakax List contained an entry dated March 7, 2018, for one Uyghur woman. The reasons listed next to her name for her internment were “having one more child than allowed by family planning policies” and “having a passport.” The *Financial Times* confirmed with her sister living in Turkey that she lost contact with the woman at that time.

In July, RFA reported that local sources said authorities in Suydung Township, Qorghas (Huocheng) County, Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture gathered local residents together and ordered them not to tell outside visitors, including both Chinese nationals and foreigners, about the forced birth control practices in the region, should inspections by such groups occur. A neighborhood committee chief in Suydung Township said, “They [the authorities] said that we should say the birth control policy is good, but that we shouldn’t give really detailed answers. They said to say ‘no’ if asked whether [residents] had IUDs inserted.” Instead, authorities instructed residents to “talk at length” about topics such as free health checks, home construction, and social security.

According to RFA, there were cases of Uyghur women who faced long-term health problems due to forced birth control procedures. A Uyghur doctor living in exile in Turkey said that since 2013, she had seen at least 200 Uyghur women fitted with IUDs and at least 80 who were forcibly sterilized. She said there were cases in which the IUDs were stuck in the uterine walls, causing physical problems. She said there were also women with psychological problems due to undergoing the procedures.

In October, the *Economist* reported that “when Uyghur girls grow old enough to wed (the legal age for which is 20 [for women] in China), they can expect to be cajoled by officials into marrying Han men. Nowadays refusal can incur retribution for the woman’s family.”

In March, the U.S.-based NGO Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation (VOC) released a report entitled *Organ Procurement and Extrajudicial Execution in China: A Review of the Evidence*. In the report, VOC stated that Uyghur Muslim prisoners of conscience, along with Falun Gong practitioners, were the most likely source of organs for sale in the country’s organ transplant market. In November, RFA reported that an infectious disease hospital in Aksu City had been turned into an internment camp, which experts said they believed indicated authorities could be harvesting organs from detainees.

Media reported authorities conducted regular, sometimes daily, inspections of private homes to ensure no religious activities were occurring. On April 27, Dili Shati, spokesperson for the WUC, told RFA that during Ramadan, in places such as in Kashgar, Hotan, and Aksu Prefectures, and other areas in the south, “The Chinese government used the political excuse of so-called poverty alleviation” to enter the homes of Muslims and encourage them to drink tea and eat fruits.

Reports published in June on the official websites of local governments in the XUAR indicated authorities restricted or banned certain groups of Muslims, including CCP members, their relatives, students, and employees of state-owned enterprises and state-run organizations, from observing Ramadan.

In May, RFA reported that authorities ordered residents in Makit (Maigaiti) County, Kashgar Prefecture to report anyone who fasted during Ramadan. A Uyghur working for the Makit County government said authorities threatened residents with punishment, including detaining them in internment camps, if they did not comply. Another Uyghur government employee said the reason for the order was to maintain “national security.” An official in Peyziwat (Jiashi) County, Kashgar Prefecture said his township scheduled dawn flag raising ceremonies and evening political study sessions specifically to interfere with fasting during Ramadan.

In April, a Kazakh human rights activist told RFA that in Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, “[E]very community and every unit must organize a large-scale group meal at noon. For those who do not have a work unit or retired people, all units must gather them for lunch together.” According to the activist, authorities placed fruits, cookies, and other foods at expressway toll booths, and required ethnic minorities to eat them, and, in some areas, officials put beer at the table and demanded Muslims drink it. The activist said village committees, town governments, and county governments organized home inspection teams to prevent observance of Ramadan fasting. “Everyone must be checked from 12 to 1. They [the inspection teams] also need to bring biscuits, sugar, and fruit, and ask people at home to eat at noon.”

In September, RFA reported that Xinjiang authorities continued to maintain a ban, enacted in 2017, on daily prayers for anyone younger than 65 years old. A village police officer in Atush City, Kizilsu Kirghiz Autonomous Prefecture said officers did not allow those younger than 65 to enter mosques. Local sources also said authorities restricted all individuals receiving government welfare benefits from saying daily prayers, including those older than age 65. According to sources, neighbors were encouraged to monitor each other and report to police on anyone “guilty” of

religious practices, such as observing daily prayer. The police officer in Atush said, “We tell the offenders that they have violated the law, and we turn them over to the village brigade. The village brigade takes them for re-education, and we then inform their family about what happened. That’s how it goes.”

In May, *Taiwan News* reported that a high school teacher in Shandong Province said the school forced all Uyghur children to eat pork with their Han classmates. According to the teacher, “To turn them into Chinese is the end goal of the education.”

The government continued to administer mosques and restrict access to houses of worship, requiring worshipers to apply for mosque entry permits. In September, ASPI stated in its report *Tracing the Destruction of Uyghur and Islamic Spaces in Xinjiang*, “In many cases, otherwise undamaged sites appear to have installed security checkpoints at the entrances or have been fully enclosed by walls, restricting access.”

In November, RFA reported on satellite imagery provided to it by the Norway-based Uyghur Transitional Justice Database. The imagery appeared to show that two camps with adjacent factories located outside Aksu City were constructed between 2017 and 2019. These were separated by a cemetery and a crematorium. Sources told RFA individuals who died in the camps were cremated, contrary to Uyghur religious and funeral traditions.

Witnesses and former prisoners stated authorities forced Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and other Muslims in custody to renounce Islam, criticize their own Islamic beliefs and those of fellow inmates, and recite CCP propaganda in the internment camps.

RFA reported that on April 28, a United Kingdom-based professor posted a series of time-lapsed satellite images on social media of authorities systematically demolishing plots in the Sultanim Cemetery in Hotan City and erecting a parking lot in 2019 and 2020. The professor stated, “This is not just a run-of-the-mill graveyard. It is a well-known sacred site, the only major one inside the city. People would go there to pray for healing, fertility, forgiveness, etc.”

According to RFA, on May 22 authorities announced plans to demolish a Uyghur cemetery in Urumqi on June 10. A document making the announcement circulated on social media. It stated those with family members buried in the cemetery needed to register to exhume their remains.

According to human rights groups and international media, in addition to the IJOP big-data collection program, authorities in Xinjiang 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.

Government documents stated that Han Chinese officials continued to implement a 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 sent 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.

In October, the online magazine *ChinaFile* published a report entitled *State of Surveillance*, examining 76,000 government procurements throughout the country related to surveillance equipment dating back to 2004. The report stated Xinjiang’s surveillance apparatus was among “the most pervasive and invasive” in the world, using facial recognition software to identify ethnic minority community populations. “A person’s facial hair, family size, even a person’s name: all are traits local governments in Xinjiang have viewed as signs of danger,” the report stated. According to the report, the surveillance system also included “QR codes on people’s front doors, which police can scan for information about the household” and required residents to “swipe ID cards to fuel up their cars.”

According to *ChinaFile*’s report, a 2017 government procurement notice for Shawan County, Tacheng Prefecture, stated the county would acquire computer systems that could “automatically identify and investigate key persons involved in terrorism and [threatening social] stability.” The report stated that a 200-page Shawan government surveillance feasibility study in 2015 found the 484 existing cameras for its population of 200,000 (77 percent Han Chinese, 18 percent ethnic Kazakh, and five percent ethnic Uyghur) was insufficient, and recommended authorities install “4,791 networked HD cameras, 70 of which were to be facial recognition units” in public spaces, including crowded places, and on buses and trains. Fifty of the 70 facial recognition units would be installed in mosques.

In its October report, *ChinaFile* stated there was a sharp increase in recent years of security cameras in “core” checkpoints (e.g., airports or subway stations), “key” checkpoints (e.g., schools, hospitals, hotels, shopping malls, and entertainment venues), and “auxiliary areas,” areas without a single point of entry or exit (e.g., sidewalks, crosswalks, or scenic areas). Photographs taken at these additional checkpoints, together with other data, fed into “surveillance algorithms.” There was also an increase of neighborhood “convenience police stations.” According to *ChinaFile*, “In Shawan, where people have to provide their ID number and have their picture taken in order to enter subways, hotels, Internet cafes, and other such places, authorities hoped to use this information to train an integrated tracking system.”

According to HRW, turning off one’s mobile phone repeatedly was also considered a suspicious behavior, as was

using a cellular phone that was not registered to the individual. Both actions could lead to detention.

In December, the *Economist* reported that authorities in Urumqi visited schools weekly to question children about their home lives. Zumrat Dawut said every Friday authorities questioned her three children and others about whether their parents prayed or used Islamic greetings at home or talked to the children about the Prophet Mohammad. Each Monday, all residents were required to attend a ceremonial raising of the national flag in the courtyard of her apartment block. Dawut said every family was told to keep watch on 10 neighboring families and report anything suspicious by putting notes in a box during the ceremony. In September, Dawut told RFA, “The Chinese [government’s] hatred of religion has gotten out of control...They’ve now put up things inside people’s homes, things that record voices, and there’s even the possibility that they’re filming people at home.” According to RFA, anyone who did not report a “mistake” within a given week was labeled as having “ideological problems” and taken to the village cadre’s office for questioning, a threat which “effectively compelled neighbors to find fault in their neighbors’ smallest, most innocuous everyday actions.”

In September, RFA reported that in Kashgar, a volunteer responsible for monitoring and reporting on 10 households said Uyghur residents there were so worried about being suspected of performing morning prayer ablutions that since 2018 they no longer washed their faces in the mornings. The brigade leader said, “In the mornings, we go and ask people what they’re up to, see what they’re doing – are people doing *namaz* [morning prayer] or not, are they washing themselves? We look at these kinds of things.”

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. In an op-ed published on January 9 in the Turkey-based *Daily Sabah*, a U.S.-based academic wrote that authorities looked for items such as prayer mats and Qurans.

Demolition of mosques continued under a campaign that began in 2016 called “Mosque Rectification.” Based on analysis of satellite imagery, ASPI, in its September report entitled *Tracing the Destruction of Uyghur and Islamic Spaces in Xinjiang*, estimated approximately 16,000 mosques in Xinjiang (65 percent of the total) had been destroyed or damaged as a result of government policies, mostly since 2017. An estimated 8,500 had been demolished outright, with satellite images showing vacant land where they previously stood. Approximately 7,500 had sustained damage. A further 30 percent of important Islamic sacred sites, including shrines, cemeteries, and pilgrimage routes, had been demolished across the region, mostly since 2017, and an additional 28 percent were damaged or altered in some way. ASPI stated, “The Chinese government’s destruction of cultural heritage aims to erase, replace and rewrite what it means to be Uyghur.” According to the *Wall Street Journal*, in response to the report, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said there were 24,000 mosques in the region.

In August, RFA reported that authorities built a public toilet on the site of the Tokul Mosque, which authorities had demolished in 2018 in Suntagh Village, Atush City, Kizilsu Kirghiz Autonomous Prefecture. A Uyghur neighborhood committee chief from Suntagh said the toilet was built approximately three kilometers (1.85 miles) outside central Atush City in an area that saw few to no tourists who would require access to a washroom. The committee chief said authorities likely built the facility to cover up the ruins of the Tokul Mosque as well as for the needs of inspecting groups or cadres visiting the area. Another resident of Suntagh said authorities tore down another mosque in the village in 2019 and built in its place a convenience store that sold alcohol and cigarettes, which Muslims generally do not consume for religious reasons.

RFA also reported in August that a public security official in Suntagh Village stated that in 2019 the government destroyed Azna Mosque and Bastaggam Mosque, leaving only Teres Mosque standing. Teres Mosque was reportedly small and in poor condition. According to the official, the Anza and Bastaggam Mosques were constructed of brick, whereas the Teres Mosque had earthen walls that were “covered with older wood.” The official said, “[The destroyed] mosques were more solid because the roofs were poured...with cement,” while the Teres Mosque could barely keep out the rain.

On August 24, *Made In China Journal* published an article analyzing the widespread destruction of *mazars*, which it defined as locations that hold particular spiritual significance, “a connection to and presence of the divine that surpasses the sacredness even of the mosque as a physical structure...Mazars are nearly always marked by some physical construction, ranging from high domes with green, glazed tiles to nothing more than a few flags on crooked twig poles.” According to the article, sometime between March 10 and 17, 2018, authorities destroyed a six-meter (20-foot) high grave marker for Imam Jefiri Sadiq, who died there 1,000 years earlier, and removed the flags surrounding the site. The pilgrimage site was located on a high sand dune 75 kilometers (47 miles) from the town of Niya. According to the article, following the destruction and removal of the flags, all that remained was “an empty dune.” Accompanying the article were before and after photographs of Imam Asim mazar, also located in the desert near Khotan, in 2010. The 2010 photograph showed pilgrims praying at Imam Asim mazar, a grave marker atop a low intact mudbrick building on a sand dune surrounded by and adorned with dozens of flags upon which pilgrims tied prayers. The 2018 photograph showed a plain, low, crumbling structure with a collapsed outer wall on a barren sand dune.

In September, NYT published an article on destruction of Islamic holy sites that included photographs taken in Kashgar. One showed a Uyghur *muezzin* calling the evening prayer from the rooftop of a partially destroyed mosque in Kashgar, and another showed a closed mosque from which the crescent symbol had been removed. Another showed the interior of a former mosque that had been turned into a bar, while a fourth showed a mosque turned into a shop. According to the article, journalists found four sites in Hotan City where mosques had been torn down and

replaced with public parks or empty lots. The article also included before and after satellite imagery at the Ordam Padishah mazar, located in the desert near Yensigar Town, 50 kilometers (31 miles) from Kashgar, that showed the shrine’s mosque, prayer hall, and housing where custodians lived had been completely obliterated by 2018. A Uyghur man from Kashgar who was living in Australia, said, “It’s like I’m losing my family members because our culture is being taken away. It’s like our flesh, our body, is being removed.”

In October, a research study published online on parent-child separation in Yarkand County, Kashgar Prefecture, analyzed data from government spreadsheets not previously available. The study found that government statistics showed that between 2017 and 2019, the number of boarding students in primary and middle schools (grades 1 to 9) increased by 76.9 percent, from 497,800 to 880,500. According to NYT, children in these schools studied ethnic Han culture, Mandarin, and CCP ideology.

In October, the *Economist* reported that in 2018, the state newspaper *Xinjiang Daily* described a visit by Zhu Hailun, deputy party chief of Xinjiang, to a “Kindness Pre-school” at a camp in Hotan Prefecture. He was told that the children, some aged less than a year, all had parents who could not take care of them “for various reasons.” In May, RFA reported that the government education authority in Karakax County, Hotan Prefecture, circulated an official notice saying that all preschools in the county must convert into boarding schools. It required guardians to drop off children on Monday morning and not pick them up until Saturday. The online study concluded that this was part of the government’s effort to assimilate children and control their culture, language, and traditions.

According to the online study of parent-child separation in Yarkand County, Kashgar Prefecture, a region with approximately 900,000 residents, there were approximately 100,000 children aged seven to 12. In 2018, the government classified more than 10,000 of these as being “children in difficult circumstances” or “children in especially difficult circumstances,” based on whether they had one or both parents in internment camps. Government records showed more than 1,000 children 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. The data indicated that 53.1 percent of all students in Yarkand lived in boarding facilities.

In December, *Bitter Winter* reported that in a boarding school in southern Xinjiang, some children were allowed to visit their relatives once every two weeks, but others had to stay at the school. There, teachers made them watch propaganda films praising the CCP. The report stated that in Korla City, Bayingolin Mongol Autonomous Prefecture, police officers took children aged 3-6 whose parents were in internment camps to “welfare houses” after school.

The Islamic Association of China, managed by the State Administration for Religious Affairs under the leadership of the United Front Work Department, passed regulations in 2019 regarding the qualifications for Muslim clerics throughout the country. The national level regulations required Muslim clerics to meet the following requirements: “uphold the leadership of the CCP; love Islam and serve Muslims; possess a degree in 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.” In addition to these, XUAR regulations on the administration of religious affairs, revised in 2014, required 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.”

To apply to become a cleric, applicants had to first submit an “Application Form for the Qualification of Islamic Clerics.” In addition, they had to 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 (which included items such as “mental history”). Applicants were also required to submit a household registration certificate and national ID card. The applicant had to receive a letter of recommendation written by the Administration of Islamic Activity Sites where the applicant’s household registration was located and submit it to the Islamic Association of the province, autonomous region, or municipality after review and approval by the local Islamic Association.

International media and NGOs reported Chinese authorities or their representatives pressured Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and other Muslims from Xinjiang to spy on fellow expatriates, return to China, or cease advocacy on behalf of residents of Xinjiang, and threatened retaliation against family members still in Xinjiang if they did not comply. The Karakax List contained personal data on more than 300 Uyghurs living abroad.

In May, a WUC representative told the U.S.-based *Vice News* that every two months the organization received more than 100 reports of CCP officials harassing Uyghurs living outside of China and pressuring them to inform on fellow Uyghurs abroad. The representative said, “The past year we have noticed it more than ever. People are breaking down because they are so mentally exhausted. Many won’t talk to us. We can understand why – families are being targeted because their relatives abroad are criticizing the Communist government.” According to *Vice News*, during the year, Uyghurs living in exile became more likely to give information on their community to protect family in Xinjiang from being sent to internment camps, where there were fears of COVID-19 outbreaks. The news outlet interviewed 12 Uyghurs living in London, 11 of whom reported suffering serious psychological trauma – including paranoia, PTSD, depression, anxiety, and night terrors – since the internment camps first opened.

In February, Amnesty International published a report stating authorities continued to pressure Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and other Muslims living abroad to return to China and threatened to retaliate against their families in Xinjiang if they spoke out about human rights abuses there. In August 2019, the *Atlantic* published “Conversations

with Uyghurs in Belgium, Finland, and the Netherlands reveal a systematic effort by China to silence Uyghurs overseas with brazen tactics of surveillance, blackmail, and intimidation.” The article described Chinese authorities monitoring Uyghurs abroad by surveilling their contacts and family members in Xinjiang via phone or social media and pressuring them to cease advocacy efforts on behalf of Uyghur rights or speak out about relatives in Xinjiang who had been detained or whose whereabouts were unknown. A Uyghur woman living in Turkey told NPR in March that one day she received a call from a Chinese area code. The man on the line identified himself as a police officer in Xinjiang. Referring to herself and her husband, she said, “He knew everything about us. He even sent us photos of our families in China. The man told me we had to spy on other Uyghurs. He said: If you don’t, you don’t know what bad things might happen to you.”

In January, *Agence France Press* reported that the Chinese embassy in Saudi Arabia had stopped renewing passports for Uyghurs and only issued documents that enabled their one-way return to China. In March, NPR estimated there were 35,000 Uyghurs living in Turkey and many of them had expired Chinese passports. A Uyghur activist living in Turkey, told NPR that he knew of many people who had attempted to renew their passports at the Chinese consulate in Turkey, only to have Chinese officials destroy them. He said officials then presented them with documents that enabled their one-way return to China. In January, one Uyghur student told RFA the Chinese embassy did renew passports for Han Chinese.

Media reported the PRC placed pressure on foreign governments to repatriate Uyghurs living in exile. On December 26, the PRC announced that the National People’s Congress had ratified an extradition treaty with Turkey, which it said would be used for counterterrorism purposes. China and Turkey signed the bilateral treaty agreement in 2017, but Turkey’s parliament has not ratified it. A number of Uyghur diaspora organizations raised concerns that Turkish ratification of the treaty could result in the extradition of Uyghur refugees living in Turkey back to China; however, local Uyghur community sources said they knew of no cases of deportations of Uyghurs to the PRC during the year. Turkish government officials, including Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, reaffirmed their commitment not to return Uyghurs to China. On December 31, Foreign Minister Cavusoglu stated, “Until now, there have been requests for returns from China related to Uyghurs in Turkey. And you know Turkey hasn’t taken steps like this.”

According to VOA, in an interview with the government-affiliated *China Global Television Network* (CGTN) in April, Elijan Anayit, a spokesperson for the XUAR government, said foreign officials and media spread “rumors” about the detention and persecution of Uyghurs. He said the government subsidized Islamic schooling, including the Xinjiang Islamic Institute, which he said had more than 1,000 students at eight branches around the region. Anayit said, “The criminals who have been prosecuted are neither religious personages nor religious staff. They are criminals who spread extremism and engage in separation, infiltration, sabotage, and terrorist and extremist activities under the banner of Islam.”

On July 19, BBC interviewed China’s ambassador to the United Kingdom Liu Xiaoming. The interviewer showed Liu drone footage appearing to show Uyghur men with their heads shaven who were blindfolded and shackled and being forced onto trains. Liu denied claims that the government was abusing Uyghurs and questioned the authenticity of the video. He said, “You know, sometimes you have transfers of prisons and prisoners in any country...There is no such a [sic] concentration camp in Xinjiang.” Asked about reports of forced birth control and forced sterilization, he said the population in Xinjiang had doubled in the past 40 years. He stated, “So there is no so-called restriction of population and there is no so-called forced abortion, and so on...Government policy is opposed to this kind of practice. But I cannot rule out, you know, single cases for any country.” Liu said, “People in Xinjiang enjoy happy life...People call for good order to [be] restored in Xinjiang. China, of course, is opposed to any torture, any persecution, and discrimination of any ethnic group of people.”

Media reported that on August 30, at a conference at the French Institute of International Relations, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said, “The rights of all trainees in the education and training program, though their minds have been encroached by terrorism and extremism, have been fully guaranteed. Now all of them have graduated, there is no one in the education and training center now. They all have found jobs.”

CGTN reported the third Central Symposium on Work Related to Xinjiang was held in Beijing on September 25-26. President Xi delivered the keynote speech, during which he lauded the CCP’s work in economic development, education, health care, and other sectors since the second central symposium in 2014. Xi stated the CCP needed to continue to promote “economic development” in Xinjiang and continue to strive to implement the Party’s “Xinjiang policy” to build a Xinjiang with “Chinese characteristics.”

In October, the government-affiliated media outlet *Tianshan Network* reported Xinjiang’s Development Research Center conducted an employment survey, purportedly to challenge reports by “Western think tanks” that forced labor was occurring in the region. According to media, the center’s report found no examples of forced labor, instead stating that minorities in Xinjiang had a “strong desire” to work, and that residents “hoped” the government would increase employment opportunities.

According to *Tianshan Network*, on October 16-17, Minister of Education Chen Baosheng visited the region to evaluate its “educational work.” During the visit, he said local authorities must continue to “strengthen the Party’s overall leadership over education” and “strengthen the work in the ideological field, guard the ideological front, and carry out the project of saturating Xinjiang with culture.”

The government-affiliated outlet *Xinhuanet.com* reported in October that XUAR government spokesperson Zuliya Simayi held a press conference to refute allegations by international organizations and media that forced labor was taking place in Xinjiang. Simayi said all “trainees” from “vocational training centers” had finished their studies and returned to normal lives. She said the “three evils” still existed and that Xinjiang authorities would “continue to deepen the fight against terrorism and de-radicalization based on the realities of the region.” At the same press conference, Rehemanjiang Dawuti, director general of the Human Resources and Social Security Department, said Xinjiang’s “labor employment” policies had increased the total number of employed workers in the region.

On December 18, at the PRC’s daily Ministry of Foreign Affairs press briefing, spokesperson Wang Wenbin was asked to comment on U.S. and international Uyghur and Muslim organizations’ calls for the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to speak out against China’s treatment of Uyghurs. Wang replied, “The human rights of the people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang are well protected in accordance with the law, and Xinjiang has made positive achievements in economic and social development. In these respects, we believe that such prejudice and smearing by relevant organizations and individuals on Xinjiang-related issues has no factual basis.”

In November, Reuters reported that in his book entitled *Let Us Dream: The Path to A Better Future*, Pope Francis wrote, “I think often of persecuted peoples: the Rohingya, the poor Uyghurs, the Yazidi.” Reuters reported that on November 24, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said at a press conference, “The Chinese government has always protected the legal rights of ethnic minorities equally.” He stated people of all ethnicities in Xinjiang enjoyed full protection of their subsistence rights, developmental rights, and religious freedom, and that “the remarks by Pope Francis are groundless.”

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Because the government and individuals closely link religion, culture, and ethnicity, it was difficult to categorize many incidents of societal discrimination as being solely based on religious identity. Unequal treatment of Uyghurs and Han Chinese continued in parallel with the authorities’ suppression of Uyghur language, culture, and religion, and the promotion of the Han majority in political, economic, and cultural life. Muslims in Xinjiang faced discrimination in hiring and in retaining their positions, and in pursuing other business opportunities.

In June, Amnesty International published an article by Cha Naiyu, an ethnic Han Chinese man who grew up in Xinjiang. Cha stated one friend who worked at a state-owned enterprise said there were no ethnic minorities at the company and no plans to recruit any. Another friend said she disliked encountering Uyghurs on the train because they were “noisy, smelly, and dirty.” A relative told Cha that ethnic minorities at the factory where he worked were slow to learn their jobs.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

Embassy officials routinely raised concerns about the treatment of Uyghur Muslims and members of other Muslim and non-Muslim minority groups in Xinjiang with government officials. Embassy staff visited the region during the year, although at a reduced rate compared with previous years due to COVID-19 restrictions. When the region was not under travel restrictions, embassy staff could travel there without requesting prior permission, but local governments denied or impeded access to schools, “re-education camps,” and residences.

The embassy and consulates general delivered direct messaging about religious freedom in Xinjiang through social media posts on Weibo and WeChat as well as on the embassy’s official website. Throughout the year, the embassy expressed to the broader Chinese public the U.S. government’s concern about the PRC’s repression of the Uyghur Muslim community with a series of posts focusing on millions of Uyghurs and other minorities in internment camps being subjected to forced labor, disappearances, sterilization, torture, and abuse.

On March 4, the Secretary of State hosted the annual International Women of Courage Awards in Washington, D.C., which honored women who demonstrated exceptional courage, strength, and leadership to bring positive change to their communities. Awardee Sayragul Sauytbay, a Muslim of Kazakh descent born in Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, was one of the first victims in the world to speak publicly about the CCP’s repressive campaign against Muslims in the region. From November 2017 to March 2018, the government forced Sayragul to teach Chinese to ethnic minorities in a detention camp. In an interview with RFA following the awards ceremony, Sayragul, speaking of the detention and forced assimilation of Uyghurs and other ethnic Muslim groups in Xinjiang, said, “The current situation has already surpassed ethnic and religious issues and has risen to a level of humanitarian tragedy.”

In an October speech on tolerance given while visiting Indonesia, the Secretary said, “The gravest threat to the future of religious freedom is the Chinese Communist Party’s war against people of all faiths: Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, and Falun Gong practitioners alike.” On October 16, at an online event hosted by the Aspen Institute, the National Security Advisor said of the CCP’s treatment of Uyghurs, “If not a genocide, something close to it [is] going on in Xinjiang.”

On June 17, the President signed into law the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020 “to direct United States resources to address human rights violations and abuses, including gross violations of human rights, by the Government of the People’s Republic of China through the mass surveillance and internment of more than 1,000,000 Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and members of other Muslim minority groups in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.” The law directed U.S. agencies to take steps to hold accountable PRC officials, or individuals acting on

their behalf, who harassed, threatened, or intimidated persons, including Uyghurs and members of other Muslim minority groups, within the United States. The law authorized the imposition of sanctions, including asset blocking and the restricting of U.S. visas, against Chinese officials responsible for the detention and other violations of the human rights of Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities. The law extends to family members of these officials. The President issued a statement accompanying the passage of the law, stating, “The Act holds accountable perpetrators of human rights violations and abuses such as the systematic use of indoctrination camps, forced labor, and intrusive surveillance to eradicate the ethnic identity and religious beliefs of Uyghurs and other minorities in China.”

On July 1, the Departments of State, the Treasury, Commerce, and Homeland Security issued the Xinjiang Supply Chain Business Advisory to caution businesses about the economic, legal, and reputational risks of supply chain links to entities that engage in human rights abuses, including forced labor in Xinjiang and elsewhere in China.

On July 9, the Secretary of State imposed visa restrictions on three senior CCP officials under Section 7031(c) of the Fiscal Year 2020 Department of State Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act for “their involvement in gross violation of human rights,” rendering them ineligible for entry into the United States. The officials were Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region XUAR party secretary Chen Quanguo, XUAR Political and Legal Committee party secretary Zhu Hailun, and Xinjiang Public Security Bureau (XPSB) party secretary Wang Mingshan. In making the announcement, the Secretary stated, “The United States will not stand idly by as the CCP carries out human rights abuses targeting Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and members of other minority groups in Xinjiang, to include forced labor, arbitrary mass detention, and forced population control, and attempts to erase their culture and Muslim faith.” Pursuant to the Immigration and Nationality Act, the Secretary also placed additional visa restrictions on other CCP officials believed to be responsible for, or complicit in, the detention or abuse of Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and members of other minority groups in Xinjiang.

Also on July 9, the Department of the Treasury imposed sanctions on Chen, Zhu, Wang, and Huo Liujun, former party secretary of the XPSB, as well as the XPSB, pursuant to Executive Order 13818, which builds on the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act. In response, the Chinese government on July 13 imposed sanctions on the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, three members of Congress, and the Congressional-Executive Commission on China. On July 31, the Department of the Treasury imposed additional Global Magnitsky sanctions on the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC) and its current and former senior officials, Sun Jinlong, a former political commissar of the XPCC, and Peng Jiarui, the deputy party secretary and commander of the XPCC. The Department of the Treasury issued a statement which read, in part: “The entity and officials are being designated for their connection to serious human rights abuse against ethnic minorities in Xinjiang, which reportedly include mass arbitrary detention and severe physical abuse, among other serious abuses targeting Uyghurs, a Turkic Muslim population indigenous to Xinjiang, and other ethnic minorities in the region.”

On May 22, the Bureau of Industry and Security of the U.S. Department of Commerce announced it would add China’s Ministry of Public Security Institute of Forensic Science and eight commercial entities to the list of entities subject to specific license requirements for export, re-export, and/or transfer in-country of specific items (the “Entity List”) for being implicated in human rights violations and abuses committed in China’s campaign of repression, mass arbitrary detention, forced labor, and high-technology surveillance against Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and other members of Muslim minority groups in Xinjiang. On July 20, the Bureau of Industry and Security announced it would add an additional 11 commercial entities to the list for the same reasons. These actions constrict the export of items subject to the Export Administration Regulations from entities that have been implicated in human rights violations and abuses in the country’s campaign targeting Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities in Xinjiang.

On May 1, June 17, September 14, and December 2, the CBP agency prohibited imports of specified merchandise, including hair products, apparel, cotton, and computer parts, produced by eight companies that operated in Xinjiang, based on information that reasonably indicated the use of prison labor and forced labor of Uyghurs and other minority groups in Xinjiang being held in internment camps. The December Withhold Release Order applied to “all cotton and cotton products produced by the XPCC and its subordinate and affiliated entities as well as any products that are made in whole or in part with or derived from that cotton, such as apparel, garments, and textiles.”

On October 6, the United States joined a group of 39 countries in signing onto a joint statement on the human rights situation in Xinjiang and recent developments in Hong Kong. The statement read, in part, “We are gravely concerned about the existence of a large network of “political re-education” camps where credible reports indicate that more than a million people have been arbitrarily detained. We have seen an increasing number of reports of gross human rights violations. There are severe restrictions on freedom of religion or belief and the freedoms of movement, association, and expression as well as on Uyghur culture.”

At the direction of the Secretary of State, U.S. government officials explored whether the PRC’s actions in Xinjiang constituted atrocities, namely crimes against humanity and genocide. The process was ongoing at year’s end.

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