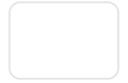


**Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale**

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Land:	Tyrkiet
Kilde:	Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
Titel:	Türkiye: Treatment of Uyghurs (Uighurs) and ethnic Chinese by society and the authorities (2020–November 2022)
Udgivet:	23. november 2022
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## IRB – Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

### Türkiye: Treatment of Uyghurs [Uighurs] and ethnic Chinese by society and the authorities (2020–November 2022) [TUR201258.E]

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

#### 1. Overview

An article by Voice of America (VOA), a US-based international broadcaster that is funded by the US Congress (VOA n.d.), indicates that Türkiye's Uyghurs constitute the largest "Uighur refugee community in the world" (VOA 7 Jan. 2021). Sources report that [roughly (Reuters 4 Jan. 2022) or as many as (Freedom House 2 June 2022, 6)] 50,000 Uyghurs are estimated to reside in Türkiye (Reuters 4 Jan. 2022; SCF 11 Mar. 2021; Freedom House 2 June 2022, 6). A thematic report by the Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre (Landinfo) on the situation of Uyghurs in Türkiye, citing information gathered from an interview with a Türkiye-based Uyghur organization, states that 70,000 Uyghurs live in the country, of whom 40,000 have Turkish citizenship (Norway 9 Dec. 2021, 8, 16).

In an interview with the Research Directorate, a research fellow at the Oriental Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences, who studies the situation of Uyghurs in Türkiye and who conducted interviews with Uyghurs in Istanbul during two separate trips in 2022, noted that the Uyghur community in Istanbul is "quite robust" (Research Fellow 1 Nov. 2022). A March 2020 article by National Public Radio (NPR), "an independent, nonprofit media organization" based in the US (NPR n.d.), indicates that "[m]any" Uyghurs in Türkiye live in the Istanbul neighborhoods of Zeytinburnu and Sefaköy (13 Mar. 2020). The same source adds that these neighbourhoods contain mosques, Uyghur-language schools, Uyghur restaurants and clothing stores, and bookstores selling Uyghur texts "banned in China" (NPR 13 Mar. 2020).

A January 2020 article by Radio Free Asia (RFA), a non-profit broadcasting corporation funded by the US Congress (RFA n.d.), notes that Uyghurs with Chinese nationality in Saudi Arabia have been unable to renew their Chinese passport there, and "are increasingly seeking asylum" in Türkiye as a result (31 Jan. 2020). The same source adds that "rights groups" believe Chinese authorities have "stop[ped] renewing" Uyghur passports as "part of a bid to force them to return home," and some Uyghurs there have "fled" for Türkiye, which "has traditionally embraced" them (RFA 31 Jan. 2020).

## 2. Treatment of Uyghurs by Authorities

A 2022 Freedom House report on "transnational repression" states that historically Türkiye has been "an appealing destination for Uyghurs from China's Xinjiang region," owing to "shared cultural, religious, and linguistic traditions," and "accommodating [Turkish] migration policies that provide access to legal residency" ( 2 June 2022, 6). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a professor of international relations at Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University in Türkiye who conducts research on the Uyghur diaspora stated that prior to "developing strategic relations" with China, the Turkish government was "known" to "protec[t]" Uyghurs and "provid[e] convenience in many areas" (Professor 5 Nov. 2022). The Landinfo report, drawing on interviews with a Turkish organization, a Turkish academic, and a Uyghur organization, provided the following:

[translation]

[The Uyghur organization and Turkish academic] interviewed by Landinfo point out that the Uyghurs that come to Türkiye do not undergo the same process as other groups seeking asylum in the country. They are given long-term residency permits which allow their children to attend school and the adults to study, but they must apply for a work permit.

[The Turkish academic notes that i]n contrast with other groups seeking asylum in Türkiye, it is not the intent of the authorities that the Uyghurs be re-settled in a third country.

However, [the Turkish organization] interviewed by Landinfo in the fall of 2021 points to the fact that a residency permit allows Uyghurs to travel to a third county to seek asylum if they so wish. Persons seeking asylum do not have this option; they will lose the basis for their residency permit if they leave the country. A residency permit also makes it much easier to travel around in Türkiye and to set up residency wherever one wishes.

[The Uyghur organization] also points to the fact that a number of Uyghurs have not registered with the Turkish authorities and are staying in the country illegally. (Norway 9 Dec. 2021, 9, in-text citations omitted)

According to the Research Fellow, the presence of Uyghurs in Türkiye is "tolerated," but their situation "remains unstable" and "many" feel "unsafe" (Research Fellow 1 Nov. 2022). The Professor noted that since Türkiye began forging "close relations" with China—and "[e]specially" since 2013—Uyghurs have felt less "secure" and have faced "various difficulties" concerning their access to "legal residence permit[s], health[care], accommodation, work permit[s], education, and security" (5 Nov. 2022). The NPR article cites an ethnic Uyghur Turkish citizen [who served as Prime Minister for the East Turkistan government in exile (East Turkistan Government in Exile n.d.)] as stating that "[m]any Uighurs arriving in Turkey since 2014 have struggled to get Turkish residency permits" (13 Mar. 2020). The same article notes that many Uyghurs have expired Chinese passports, and it quotes the same Uyghur source as stating that when such people try to renew those passports at the Chinese Consulate, "'the Chinese rip them up'" and "'hand out documents'" which only allow for one-way travel back to China (NPR 13 Mar. 2020). Similarly, the Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP), a US-based Uyghur advocacy organization, shares in an April 2020 report the stories of two Uyghur individuals who were unable to renew their Chinese passports in Türkiye and were instead offered a travel document to China (UHRP Apr. 2020, 6, 8). According to the Freedom House report on "transnational repression," in 2021 Türkiye "became more dangerous" for those "targeted by foreign regimes," especially Turkmenistan and China (2 June 2022, 6).

The 2022 Freedom House annual report notes that amidst a struggling economy and "estrangement" from democratic allies, Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has "increasingly shifted his stance to meet Beijing's demands" (24 Feb. 2022, 10). An article by the Associated Press (AP), notes that "in recent years," "as it has developed economic ties with China," Türkiye "has become less vocal about the plight of Uyghurs" (9 Feb. 2021). An August 2020 VOA article notes that Uyghur "protests" in Türkiye against the treatment of Uyghurs in China "are becoming increasingly rare," and Uyghur activists have "complain[ed] that Turkish authorities are now targeting them" (24 Aug. 2020).

The Professor indicated that although Türkiye "has allowed" Uyghurs to enter and remain in the country, they have not been granted "any legal status due to legislation and Chinese reservations" (5 Nov. 2022). In an interview with the Research Directorate, a PhD student at Koç University in Türkiye who has conducted research on China's "transnational repression" of Uyghurs in Türkiye translated the following statistics, attributed to Türkiye's Ministry of the Interior as of 26 December 2021, from an article by [the Turkish state-run media organization (Reuters n.d.)] Anadolu Agency [1]:

- A total of 17,997 Uyghurs in Türkiye possessed a long-term residence permit; this figure excludes those with Turkish citizenship, those that do not possess any national passport, those with student permits, and those with short-term residence permits.
- A total of 6,161 Uyghurs in Türkiye have Turkish citizenship "by exceptional means"; this includes the 235 Uyghurs who gained citizenship before 2002, and the 5,836 who gained citizenship between 2002 and 2021 (PhD student 14 Nov. 2022).

However, sources stated that during the first 8 months of 2022, approximately 1,000 Uyghurs received Turkish citizenship (Research Fellow 1 Nov. 2022; PhD student 14 Nov. 2022), including many who applied several years ago (Research Fellow 1 Nov. 2022). The Research Fellow added that "many have interpreted this" "faster" "process[ing]" of submitted applications "within the context" of Türkiye's upcoming 2023 elections, and the ruling party's efforts to "score points with Uyghur voters" (1 Nov. 2022).

The Research Fellow also noted that they are aware of some Uyghurs who have yet to receive Turkish citizenship, which those people "interpret as Türkiye coming under pressure from China" (1 Nov. 2022). Sources report that Turkish authorities have "rejected" some Uyghur citizenship applications on the grounds that those people posed "risks" to the country's "'national security'" or to its "'social'" (VOA 16 Mar. 2022) or "'public'" (Axios 1 Mar. 2022) "'order'" (Axios 1 Mar. 2022; VOA 16 Mar. 2022). An article by Axios, a US-based online media organization (Axios n.d.), adds that they spoke with five such Uyghurs who had their citizenship applications "rejected," which included some who had lived in Türkiye since 2013 and 2015, some who had "sp[oken] out against the Chinese government" or "participated in protests" in Türkiye against China's treatment of Uyghurs, and some who had "never participated in protests or anti-China social media activity" (1 Mar. 2022).

## 2.1 Detainment, Deportation, and Extradition

The Research Fellow stated that many Uyghurs are "worried about being extradited to China" or being "detained in pre-transfer detention," where some Uyghurs have been "detained" before (1 Nov. 2022). The same source added that some Uyghurs were "detained" for a few days, but that they had also met one person who had been "detained" for "over" one year (Research Fellow 1 Nov. 2022). The NPR article draws on conversations with over a dozen Uyghurs in Istanbul who have been "arrested" by Turkish police and "sent" to deportation centres, "sometimes for months" without being told why they were there (13 Mar. 2020). The same source adds that all interviewees "suspect China's involvement"

in their detentions, and the article cites that one Uyghur activist has "counted at least 200 such detentions since January 2019" and a lawyer who says they have "assisted more than 400 Uyghurs arrested in the past year" (NPR 13 Mar. 2020). The Freedom House 2022 annual report notes that Turkish authorities have made it more difficult for Uyghurs to acquire and retain permanent residence permits and "several hundred" have been "detained in deportation centers" (24 Feb. 2022, 10). The August 2020 VOA article indicates that Turkish authorities have "detained some Uyghurs for links to" Islamic State (IS) [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Daesh]; however, "rights groups allege recent Uyghur detentions are more about appeasing China" (24 Aug. 2020). The same article cites an Istanbul-based lawyer for the International Refugee Rights Association (IRRA) who is "currently fighting several Chinese extradition attempts against prominent Uyghur activists" and who states that "[p]eople are taken into detention with the accusation of [being] foreign terrorist fighters, even though there is no evidence" (VOA 24 Aug. 2020).

In an interview with the Research Directorate, a Norway-based Uyghur linguist and human rights activist stated that to date there is no evidence that Türkiye has ever sent Uyghurs directly to China (Linguist 16 Nov. 2022). The August 2020 VOA article quotes the IRRA lawyer as stating that Turkish authorities representing the "Interior and Foreign Affairs Ministry and the security forces" have expressed to them that "deporting five to 10 Uyghurs would make Turkey more comfortable economically and politically" (24 Aug. 2020). In the same article, the lawyer notes that despite this statement, "it is unlikely any [Uyghurs] will face deportation to China"; were the government to do so, it would face "big trouble" and would be "seriously harmed politically" "given Turkish public support for Uyghurs" (VOA 24 Aug. 2020). An article by the *Telegraph*, a UK-based newspaper (*The Telegraph* n.d.), quotes the same IRRA lawyer who states that "[n]o Uyghurs will be extradited directly to China"; the lawyer believes that will not change "any time soon" (*The Telegraph* 26 July 2020). An [translation] "international human rights organization" interviewed by Landinfo similarly stated that no Uyghurs are deported "directly" from Türkiye to China (Norway 9 Dec. 2021, 12). According to an April 2021 article by RFA, a Turkish court "rejected" a Chinese request to "extradite" a Uyghur religious teacher to China to face "terrorism" charges there, citing a "lack of credible evidence" (9 Apr. 2021). The same source adds that the man had been "arrested" in 2016 and "had since been under detention or house arrest" (RFA 9 Apr. 2021).

According to the AP article, in February 2021 dozens of Uyghur "protestors" assembled near the Chinese Embassy in Ankara, and four "protestors were escorted into a police van, although police insisted they were not being detained" (9 Feb. 2021).

The NPR article reports that in 2019 a Uyghur man, who had lived in Türkiye for 5 years since "fleeing" China's Xinjiang region, was "arrest[ed]" by "two Turkish plainclothes policemen" before being sent "to a deportation center" where he spent 3 months (13 Mar. 2020). The same source adds that at the deportation center, the man encountered "at least 20 other Uyghurs there," and upon his release Turkish authorities "urged him not to speak out against China" (NPR 13 Mar. 2020). The August 2020 VOA article reports that Turkish police "detained" Uyghur "protestors for wearing T-shirts displaying pictures of family members interned [in China] by Chinese authorities," and one of the event organizers states that "they were only released" after police told them to "turn their T-shirts inside out" (24 Aug. 2020).

### 2.1.1 Extradition Treaty

Sources report that there exists an extradition treaty between Türkiye and China which was ratified by China in 2020 but has not yet been ratified by Türkiye (CNN 8 June 2021; PhD student 14 Nov. 2022).

Sources note that the text of the treaty contains "a disturbing clause that allows for broad interpretations of 'terrorism'" (Chiu 2021, 258) or "ambiguous phrases that might trigger the extradition" of Uyghurs from Türkiye and that would "violate extradition mechanisms regulated by the European Convention on Extradition (ECE), to which Turkey is a party" (Nordic Monitor 19 May 2020); the passage in question provides the following: "[i]t shall not matter whether the laws of both parties place the offence within the same category or describe the offence by the same terminology" (Nordic Monitor 19 May 2020; Chiu 2021, 258).

The Landinfo report cites a Uyghur organization as stating that the treaty [translation] "will not be ratified" and that the Uyghur community "has been given assurances that no one will be deported" (Norway 9 Dec. 2021, 11). The linguist indicated that they did not believe Turkish Parliament could ratify the treaty, owing to the presence of a "strong Uyghur lobby" in Türkiye and "opposition parties" which have "very strong stances" on China's treatment of Uyghurs (16 Nov. 2022). The same source added that Turkish authorities might not feel it is "important" to ratify the treaty, since they could "simply" extradite someone to China "by indirect" means "via" a third-party country (Linguist 16 Nov. 2022). In contrast, the PhD student indicated that there is a "high risk" that the treaty could be ratified by Turkish Parliament (14 Nov. 2022).

An article by the *Globe and Mail*, states that an October 2022 European Court of Human Rights ruling could "bloc[k]" any extradition from the 46 member countries of the Council of Europe (which includes Türkiye) to China (2 Nov. 2022). The same source notes that the European Court of Human Rights ruling in *Liu v. Poland* "barred the extradition" of a Chinese citizen to China on the grounds that it would violate article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which "prohibits torture and 'inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment'"; all 46 Council of Europe members are "bound by the ECHR" (*The Globe and Mail* 2 Nov. 2022).

According to the linguist, between 2018 and 2019 there were cases of "indirect extradition," in which Uyghurs were sent to China "via a third country"; the "third" countries involved were Uzbekistan, the United Arab Emirates, and Tajikistan (16 Nov. 2022). The *Telegraph* article reports that Uyghurs and lawyers in Türkiye believe that multiple Türkiye-based Uyghurs have been "extradited to Tajikistan"—despite having no history with, or legal status in, that country—and subsequently "sent to China" from there (26 July 2020). RFA reports that "at least" 3 Uyghurs, including a mother and her two children, were "deported" by Türkiye to Tajikistan in 2019 and were then believed to have been sent to China from there (9 Aug. 2019).

An article by the *Diplomat*, a magazine focused on events in the Asia-Pacific region (*The Diplomat* n.d.), indicates that lawyers who represent Uyghurs in Türkiye state that "hundreds" of Uyghurs there have been "charged with 'activities against China' and taken to deportation centers across the country on terrorism charges" (13 Feb. 2021).

## 2.2 Chinese Spies and Surveillance

The Research Fellow noted that "many" Uyghurs in Türkiye "have been threatened by Chinese actors," "either online or in person," and stated that many see Turkish authorities as "not succeeding in countering these Chinese actors" (1 Nov. 2022). The same source added that there are many "Chinese spies" in Uyghur communities (Research Fellow 1 Nov. 2022). According to a 2020 article by RFA, a Uyghur man in Istanbul, "who claims he was forced to spy" on Uyghurs "living in exile" in Türkiye on behalf of the Chinese government, was "shot by an unknown" Azeri man that "he believes is a Chinese agent" (3 Nov. 2020). The same man, in a 2019 article by Al Jazeera, stated that his "role" had been to "feed information" to Chinese officials, including reporting on "everything" Uyghur people in Türkiye

did—"what they ate, drank, what they did in private in their homes, whether it was friends or relatives" (1 Feb. 2019). The same article notes that from 2012 to 2018 the man was "sent" abroad and "told to infiltrate Uighur communities in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkey" (Al Jazeera 1 Feb. 2019).

An article by BBC indicates that a Uyghur man from Xinjiang who studies in Türkiye received a telephone call from someone "who said he was from the Chinese embassy in Ankara" a few weeks after he had posted on a social media application about his family's "mass arrest" in Xinjiang (31 Mar. 2021). The same article, citing a recording of the call that the man provided to the BBC, states that the caller told the man to "'write down everyone [he had] been in contact with since [he] left Xinjiang,'" and to "send an email 'describing [his] activities', so that 'the mainland might reconsider [his] family's situation'" (BBC 31 Mar. 2021). The BBC article states that another Uyghur person in Türkiye informed them of a "similar call from the same embassy," and the article notes that a different Uyghur student in Türkiye provided the BBC with "screenshots" of "messages from police" (31 Mar. 2021). The same source reports that this "pattern of threats [and] harassment" was "designed to deter [Uygurs] from speaking out" against human rights abuses in China or to "pressure [them] to spy on fellow Uyghurs and organisations that scrutinise China" (BBC 31 Mar. 2021). The Research Fellow stated that Uyghurs will receive phone calls discouraging them from activism, encouraging them to work for the Chinese security agencies, or trying to "coerce them into returning to China" by "effectively" holding their family members there "hostage" (1 Nov. 2022). The same source added that "police in Xinjiang" will use an "intimidation tactic" that involves placing a video call to a Uyghur person in Türkiye while sitting next to one of their family members (Research Fellow 1 Nov. 2022).

### 3. Treatment of Uyghurs by Society

Sources indicated that Turkish society "generally has warm and close feelings" towards Uyghurs there (Professor 5 Nov. 2022) or treats them "pretty warmly" with "feelings of fraternity" as "being part of the Turkish nationality" (Research Fellow 1 Nov. 2022). The Research Fellow added that Uyghurs are "treated better" by Turkish society than Arabs from Syria (1 Nov. 2022). The PhD student stated that while Turkish society is "warm" and "welcoming" to Uyghurs, since 2018—owing to Türkiye's "economic crisis" and a rise in "anti-migrant sentiment"—Uyghurs have, like other migrant communities, "suffered some" "minor problems" including incidents of "discrimination" and "hate discourse" (14 Nov. 2022).

A March 2022 VOA article reports that the Turkish people "have been sympathetic" to Uyghurs (16 Mar. 2022). The Professor indicated that Turkish people "do not approve" of, and "criticize," their government's policies regarding Uyghurs in Türkiye as well as the government's stance toward China (5 Nov. 2022). According to the Research Fellow, Turkish citizens who are aware of the situation of Uyghurs in China are "largely unsympathetic" to China (1 Nov. 2022).

An article by Duvar English, the English-language version of the online independent Turkish news site GazeteDuvar (Nieman Reports 3 Feb. 2020), reports that on 26 December 2021 two 16-year-olds "stabb[ed]" and "heavily injured" a 17-year-old "Uyghur Turk" in Istanbul's Büyükçekmece district (31 Dec. 2021). The same source adds that the "assailants" had an argument with the Uyghur teen and were "'disturbed'" by his "'way of looking at them'" (Duvar English 31 Dec. 2021). According to the PhD student's observations on the incident, the "stabb[ing]" "appeared to be a hate crime" and occurred after the victim had been called an "outsider" and was harassed by the perpetrators because they "looked foreign" (14 Nov. 2022). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. The Duvar English

article reports that the police "tracked the assailants and detained them," and they had been "referred to a court, which ruled for their arrest" (31 Dec. 2021).

#### 4. Support Programs

Information on support programs for Uyghurs in Türkiye was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The Research Fellow stated that to their knowledge, Türkiye does not have any agencies "explicitly designed" to support Uyghurs or "any refugees" (1 Nov. 2022). The same source added that many Uyghurs are supported by Turkish charities (Research Fellow 1 Nov. 2022).

#### 5. Treatment of Ethnic Chinese by Authorities and by Society

Information on the treatment of ethnic Chinese people by Turkish authorities and society was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to the Professor, ethnic Chinese people in Türkiye are "well protected" by authorities (5 Nov. 2022). The same source added that the "tens of thousands of ethnic Chinese" people in the country are "not usually visible" and tend to live a "closed lifestyle" (Professor 5 Nov. 2022). The Professor noted that it would be "difficult to say" that Turkish people, and "especially" those that pay close attention to the situation of Uyghurs in China, "have good feelings" towards Chinese people (Professor 5 Nov. 2022). The PhD student noted that while Turkish people are "generally" "friendly" to ethnic Chinese people, there are also "highly nationalistic Turkish people who are anti-Chinese" (14 Nov. 2022).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Note

[1] The original Turkish article by the Anadolu Agency (AA) is available online (AA 26 Dec. 2021).

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**Oral sources:** International Crisis Group; professor at a university in British Columbia who specializes in Chinese surveillance technologies and ethnic minority policy; professor at a university in Türkiye who specializes in the situation of Uyghurs in Türkiye.

**Internet sites, including:** Amnesty International; Australia – Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; Austrian Red Cross – [ecoi.net](http://ecoi.net); Bertelsmann Stiftung; *China Daily*; Citizen Lab; The Daily Beast; Deutsche Welle; Factiva; *The Guardian*; Human Rights Watch; International Crisis Group; The Jamestown Foundation; *Maclean's*; Mercator Institute for China Studies; Observer Research Foundation; Safeguard Defenders; *South China Morning Post*; SupChina; UK – Home Office; UN – Refworld; Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization; US – Congressional-Executive Commission on China, Department of State; Xinhua News Agency.

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**ecoi.net summary:**

Query response on Türkiye: Treatment of Uighurs and ethnic Chinese persons by society and authorities (2020 - November 2022) (treatment by authorities; detention, deportation and extradition; extradition treaty between Türkiye and China; Chinese spies and surveillance)

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