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Letter from the dais

Dear BUSUN XXV Delegates:

My name is Alex Lehman and I am a sophomore from New York City concentrating in International & Public Affairs and Gender & Sexuality Studies. I am passionate about women's rights and their intersection with geopolitical conflict; to that end, I conducted a multi-year independent study on the impact of gender on genocide, traveling to Rwanda, Guatemala, and Hungary. Prior to starting at Brown, I took a gap year to further pursue these interests, living and interviewing women throughout Indonesia and interning for the Universal Access Project at the United Nations Foundation. At Brown, I help lead Circle of Women (a global girls' education organization) and Planned Parenthood Advocates, where I also volunteer in-clinic. I also work on the Interviews Board for the Brown Political Review and love exploring Providence. I ultimately hope to work in international humanitarian law or policy with an emphasis on gender-based violence in conflict settings.

The Rohingya refugee crisis is an unfortunate exemplar of the destructive dynamics deriving from ethnic cleansing, questions of identity and national belonging, political turmoil, and exacerbated gender inequities. It has been a subject of personal interest and concern for many years, and I am incredibly excited that we will have the chance to examine and debate its many facets in the Human Rights Committee. My hope is to create an environment for you all to meaningfully grapple with these complex topics, hone your public speaking skills, and engage in collaboration and creative problem solving. I am really looking forward to hearing your great ideas! In the meantime, let this background guide be a springboard for your research and preparation. See you soon!

Sincerely,
Alexandra Lehman '24, Chair
Human Rights Council, BUSUN XXV
alexandra_lehman@brown.edu

Dear BUSUN XXV Delegates:

My name is Fia Boffey and I am a sophomore at Brown double concentrating in Linguistics and Linguistic Anthropology. My interest in Model U.N. stems from the fact that I moved around a lot growing up — before college, I lived in Kazakhstan, Dubai, and Georgia (the country), where I enjoyed participating in local conferences. Though I have never chaired a committee before, I completed the All-American MUN training program in Boston and represented my high school in conferences in Rome and Armenia. Here, on campus, I can usually be found riding my bright pink kick scooter down Hope Street, grabbing a grinder at Andrews between classes, or running around with a PVC pipe between my legs for the Brown Bears Quidditch club.

The Uighur crisis has captured the world's attention due to numerous human rights violations that have come to light over the past several years. From involuntary internment to forced sterilization and labor, this Human Rights Council simulation will give us the chance to examine the many aspects of this conflict and debate



these issues with the appropriate gravity and focus they deserve. I am very excited to see what you will come up with during the committee and I hope this background guide will serve you well in preparing for the discussions to come.

Sincerely,
Fiametta Boffey '24, Co-Chair
Human Rights Council, BUSUN XXV
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The Rohingya refugee crisis

Introduction

Since the 1970s, the **Rohingya** — an ethnic, Muslim group residing in predominantly Buddhist Myanmar — have faced state-sanctioned discrimination and violence. Their history dates back to the fifteenth century, but in the wake of Myanmar's (formerly Burma) independence from colonial rule, the Rohingya were not granted recognition as one of the country's official ethnic groups. Instead, they are viewed as illegal Bengali immigrants.¹ The Rohingya face **statelessness**: they do not possess formal citizenship or legal documentation from the government. Further forms of discrimination include restrictions on education, employment, marriage, family planning, religious



Figure 1: Rohingya refugees crossing the border to Bangladesh. (Albert and Maizland)

choice, and freedom of movement.² The majority of Rohingya reside in the Rakhine State, which is comparatively underdeveloped and has a poverty rate of 78%.³ There have been major incidences of violence against the Rohingya, including in 1978, 1991-1992, and 2016, as nationalism gains greater prominence and institutional support.⁴

However, the most severe violence against the Rohingya occurred in **August of 2017**, after the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) attacked police posts. This was the catalyst for an aggressive, government-ordered military campaign under the façade of “reinstating stability.” Massacres, village burnings, and widespread rape were conducted throughout the Rakhine State by the **Tatmadaw** (Myanmar's military); over 6,700 Rohingya were killed in the first month alone.⁵ Many human rights groups have identified motives of **ethnic cleansing**, and a United Nations fact-finding panel declared the military forces as acting with “**genocidal intent**.” Many countries, including the United States, have yet to formally recognize the violent campaigns as “genocide,” despite growing pressure.⁶

The violent crackdown prompted 700,000 Rohingya to flee Myanmar as refugees.⁷ In the subsequent years, hundreds of thousands more have joined them. 900,000 Rohingya are currently situated in neighboring Bangladesh, many in what is now the world's largest refugee camp, **Cox's Bazaar**.⁸ Many other Rohingya have fled to

¹ Eleanor Albert and Lindsay Maizland, "What Forces Are Fueling Myanmar's Rohingya Crisis?," *Council on Foreign Relations (CFR)*, last modified January 23, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/rohingya-crisis>.

² Albert and Maizland, "Myanmar's Rohingya Crisis."

³ "IOM Appeal - Myanmar / Rakhine State: April 2016 - April 2018," *International Organization for Migration*, last modified June 1, 2016, <https://www.iom.int/appeal/iom-appeal-myanmar-rakhine-state-april-2016-april-2018>.

⁴ "Rohingya Refugee Crisis," *OCHA*, April 18, 2019, <https://www.unocha.org/rohingya-refugee-crisis>.

⁵ Albert and Maizland, "Myanmar's Rohingya Crisis."

⁶ Lara Jakes, "Genocide Designation for Myanmar Tests Biden's Human Rights Policy," *The New York Times*, June 30, 2021,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/30/us/politics/biden-genocide-rohingya-myanmar.html>.

⁷ Albert and Maizland, "Myanmar's Rohingya Crisis."

⁸ Albert and Maizland, "Myanmar's Rohingya Crisis."



Malaysia, India, Thailand, and Indonesia. Host countries have insufficient resources and space to adequately care for the refugees. Food and housing insecurity, lack of access to education and healthcare, disease outbreak, contaminated water supplies, sexual violence, and natural disasters have rendered the Rohingya extremely vulnerable and aid dependent.⁹ While the refugee influx has relatively stabilized, the question of “**what’s next**” looms large.

Definition of Key Terms

Refugee

The 1951 UN Refugee Convention defines “refugee” as “someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.”¹⁰

Genocide

In accordance with the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, “genocide” is defined as “any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”¹¹

Crimes Against Humanity

⁹ Albert and Maizland, “Myanmar’s Rohingya Crisis.”

¹⁰ “What Is a Refugee?,” *UNHCR*, accessed August 2, 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/what-is-a-refugee.html#:~:text=The%201951%20Refugee%20Convention%20is,group,%20or%20political%20opinion.>

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Article 7, defines “crimes against humanity” as “any of the following acts when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack: murder; extermination; enslavement; deportation or forcible transfer of population; imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law; torture; rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity; persecution against any identifiable group or collectivity on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender, or other grounds that are universally recognized as impermissible under international law, in connection with any act referred to in this paragraph or any crime within the jurisdiction of the Court; enforced disappearance of persons; the crime of apartheid; other inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health.” The crimes must contain *physical, contextual, and mental* elements.¹²

Background Information

2021 Coup d’état

On February 1, 2021, the Tatmadaw violently ousted democratically elected Aung San Suu Kyi and National League for Democracy (NLD) party members from power. The military contested the results of the November election, in which the NLD had won a landslide of votes. Hundreds, including children, were killed in the ensuing conflict. Min Aung Hlaing, the military (junta) commander-in-chief, is now in power. General Hlaing was a primary driver in the ethnic cleansing campaigns

¹¹ “United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect,” *United Nations*, accessed August 2, 2020,

<https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide.shtml>.

¹² *United Nations*, “Responsibility to Protect.”



against the Rohingya. The country will be placed under a “state of emergency” for the coming year, while return prospects for the Rohingya look bleak.¹³

Major Countries and Organizations

Myanmar

Myanmar is the country of origin for the Rohingya refugees. However, the government fails to recognize the full citizenship of the group and was behind the violent campaigns that led to their fleeing. Under current Tatmadaw rule, the Rohingya’s right of return is not upheld.



Figure 2: Map of Myanmar and surrounding countries. (Encyclopedia Britannica)

Bangladesh

Bangladesh is the primary host for Rohingya refugees. Their presence costs the country \$1.2 billion annually and donor fatigue has led to greater gaps in funding. Bangladesh is home to Cox’s Bazaar, where the majority of the country’s

¹³ Alice Cuddy, "Myanmar Coup: What Is Happening and Why?," *BBC News*, April 01, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-55902070>.

Rohingya refugees are living. The refugee camps strain the country’s infrastructure, public health, and urban planning. [Please refer to *Appendix 1* for a full map of refugee sites for the Rohingya in Bangladesh.]

People’s Republic of China

China has attempted to facilitate repatriation talks between Myanmar and Bangladesh. China shares a 1,500-mile border with Myanmar; as such, it holds vested security, economic, and political interests in the latter’s internal affairs.¹⁴ China may look to mitigate violent conflict with the potential to spill into its own territory. In the UN, China has leveraged its influence and voting power to protect Myanmar from sanctions. In Rakhine, China gains significant economic advantage through use of a major port at Kyaukphyu, a special economic zone, and a robust road, rail, and pipeline network.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

The UNHCR is the leading UN agency coordinating humanitarian aid and response to the Rohingya crisis. UNHCR has been working particularly closely with Bangladesh to provide supplies and support to furnish the refugee camps.



Figure 3: UNHCR protection officer providing a tarpaulin in Kutupalong refugee camp. (UNHCR)

Along with partner organizations, UNHCR created

¹⁴ "China's Role in Myanmar's Internal Conflicts," *United States Institute of Peace*, September 18, 2018, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2018/09/chinas-role-myanmars-internal-conflicts>.



a Joint Response Plan in 2018 to comprehensively address the crisis.

Médecins Sans Frontiers / Doctors Without Borders

MSF is an international association of doctors and health workers serving “populations in distress,” particularly victims of armed conflict and natural or man-made disasters. Rohingya refugees face significant health issues. In the crowded camps, access to adequate sanitation, hygiene, and medical care is limited. As a result of these conditions, refugees frequently face respiratory infections, diarrheal diseases, and skin diseases. MSF has provided over one million medical consultations, mental health consultations, and inpatient admissions. Additionally, MSF teams have run vaccination campaigns and worked to improve water and sanitation services in the camp.¹⁵

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

The ICRC is one of the few humanitarian agencies operating in the Rakhine State.

Since 2017, the ICRC has provided essential emergency assistance including food, shelter, and health services to the Rohingya. The ICRC has also worked on longer-term projects, particularly providing sustainable livelihoods for refugees. Its mission is based on the Geneva Conventions; as such, the ICRC has invoked international humanitarian law in its provision of protections for the Rohingya.¹⁶

¹⁵ "Rohingya Refugee Crisis," *Doctors Without Borders*, accessed August 2, 2020, <https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/rohingya-refugee-crisis>.

¹⁶ "Mandate and Mission," *International Committee of the Red Cross*, June 14, 2019, <https://www.icrc.org/en/who-we-are/mandate>.

Timeline of Key Events

| Date | Description of Event |
|-------------------------|--|
| February 1, 2021 | Military coup d'état overthrows Aung San Suu Kyi. Tatmadaw junta takes power. |
| November 8, 2020 | General election, later contested by Tatmadaw. |
| August 2017 | Violent crackdown on Rohingya by Myanmar military. 700,000 refugees displaced. |
| November 8, 2015 | National League for Democracy (NLD) takes power as a result of the general election. |

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees
- Genocide Convention
- Responsibility to Protect
- December 28, 2019: The UN General Assembly approves a resolution condemning human rights abuses in Myanmar, expressing “deep distress,” and calling for a cessation of hostilities.¹⁷
- July 13, 2021: The 47th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva unanimously adopts a resolution calling for the protection of Rohingya’s human rights,

¹⁷ The Associated Press, "U.N. Resolution Condemns Myanmar's Abuse of Rohingya," *The New York Times*, January 23, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/28/world/asia/united-nations-rohingya.htm>.



praising Bangladesh for its role in providing shelter, and calling on the international community for the continued provision of humanitarian assistance.¹⁸

- International Court of Justice: *The Gambia v. Myanmar*— The Gambia filed a case against Myanmar before the I.C.J. on allegations of genocide. This is a state-to-state litigation as described in the UN Charter. The case process began in November of 2019; it remains pending and ongoing.¹⁹

Main Issues

Violence, ethnic cleansing, and genocide

The human rights of the Rohingya were most grievously assaulted during violent military crackdowns. Watchdog organizations have claimed that the Tatmadaw committed genocide against the Rohingya. Villages were razed to the ground and many women and girls were victims of mass rape. Rare testimony from soldiers revealed the orders given to “Shoot all you see and all you hear” and “Kill all you see whether children or adults.”²⁰ Many more testimonies from survivors include recollections of horrific, brutal violence. Clear intent on the Tatmadaw’s behalf to exterminate the Rohingya was documented. Later, thousands of bodies were dumped into mass graves, whose existence is still denied by the government.

Acts of ethnic cleansing and genocide are an affront to conceptions and codifications of human

¹⁸ TPT Bureau, “U.N. Human Rights Council Unanimously Adopts a Resolution Calling for a Solution to Rohingya Crisis,” *The Policy Times*, July 14, 2021, <https://thepolicytimes.com/un-human-rights-council-unanimously-adopts-a-resolution-calling-for-a-solution-to-rohingya-crisis/>.

¹⁹ “Latest Developments: Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (The Gambia v. Myanmar): International Court of Justice,” *International Court of Justice*, last modified January 28, 2021, <https://www.icj-cij.org/en/case/178>.

rights in international law. When the United Nations was formed in the wake of World War II and the Holocaust, its mandate was predicated on a commitment to global peace and upholding of human rights. The Rohingya crisis explicitly violates these values.

Displacement

The Rohingya are now one of the world’s largest populations of stateless people. Unsafe conditions persist in the Rakhine State, while host countries are unable to provide adequate, sustainable, and long-term resettlement opportunities. [Please refer to *Appendix 2* for a map of Rohingya migrant movement.] Displaced people, particularly children, are at greater risk of human trafficking, labor and economic exploitation, early marriage, aggravated smuggling, lower educational attainment, and violence.²¹ The Rohingya refugees are part of a growing number of forcibly displaced people due to human rights violations and conflict. This group has doubled over the past decade, increasing from 41 million (2010) to 78.5 million (2020) and marking the highest recorded number to date.²² 87% of the world’s forcibly displaced people, including the Rohingya, are hosted in developing countries. Globally, xenophobia, nationalism, and hostile political attitudes towards immigration are on the rise. Inversely, refugee resettlement is at its lowest in two decades. The COVID-19 pandemic has played a large role in dramatically exacerbating pre-existing obstacles facing displaced people.

Further, climate change has contributed to an uptick in natural disasters, forcing greater migratory

²⁰ Hannah Beech, Saw Nang, and Marlise Simons, “Kill All You See: In a First, Myanmar Soldiers Tell of Rohingya Slaughter,” *The New York Times*, September 08, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/08/world/asia/myanmar-rohingya-genocide.html>.

²¹ “Migrant and Displaced Children,” *UNICEF*, July 14, 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/migrant-refugee-internally-displaced-children>.

²² “Forced Migration or Displacement,” *Migration Data Portal*, accessed August 2, 2021, <https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/forced-migration-or-displacement>.



waves and contributing to challenges for current refugees housed in vulnerable camps. The Rohingya living in Cox's Bazaar have notably faced devastating floods, monsoons, and tropical cyclones. Shelters have been destroyed, leaving thousands of refugees homeless and killing some in landslides. The International Organization for Migration has identified the district in which Cox's Bazaar is located as one of the most disaster-prone areas of Bangladesh.²³

Gender-based violence

Rohingya women and girls are particularly vulnerable and frequently subjected to gender-based violence (GBV). During the initial onset of state-sanctioned violence in Rakhine, rape was utilized as a tool of violence and ethnic cleansing. In its wake, unwanted pregnancies; genital injuries; sexually transmitted infections; and mental, emotional, and physical trauma were pervasive. Increased pregnancies contributed to dangerously high fertility rates, unsafe abortions, and maternal and child mortality. Refugee camp facilities are ill-equipped to provide comprehensive sexual and reproductive healthcare. Contraceptives are hard to come by; abortion is illegal in Bangladesh and Myanmar.²⁴

One in four female refugees surveyed in Cox's Bazaar were survivors of GBV prior to COVID-19. The number rose after the virus hit, constituting a "shadow pandemic" of its own.²⁵ While the majority of GBV incidences early in the crisis were

perpetrated by attacking soldiers, 94% of current perpetrators were intimate partners as lockdowns and stay-at-home mandates were implemented. Further, cultural, and social stigmas, economic dependence, and restricted mobility create barriers for women to report, act, or seek care following GBV.

Previous Solutions

Memorandum of Understanding

A "Memorandum of Understanding" to facilitate the return of the Rohingya was signed in 2018 between the Myanmar government, UNHCR, UNDP.²⁶ The agreement strived to ensure repatriation, formal recognition of identity recognition, and sustainable peace for the Rohingya. However, it was rejected by Rohingya representatives.²⁷

Joint Response Plan(s)

In the years following the mass exodus of Rohingya, plans for international, collaborative funding to support the refugees were signed by the UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration, and the government of Bangladesh. The most recent plan, written in May 2021, called for \$943 million. However, only \$340 million was pledged, mirroring a downward trajectory in country contributions.²⁸

²³ Julhas Alam, "Floods Make Thousands Homeless in Bangladesh Rohingya Camps," *AP News*, July 29, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/health-bangladesh-coronavirus-pandemic-floods-united-nations-4ae3f70009de3e66109f219ea3cd199b>.

²⁴ Jenna Mae Stoken, "Suffering in Silence: Sexual and Gender-based Violence against the Rohingya Community and the Importance of a Global Health Response," *Journal of Global Health*, December 19, 2020, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7750012/#R1>.

²⁵ "GBV Trends Among Rohingya Refugees in Cox's Bazar: COVID-19 Update," *International Rescue Committee (IRC)*, January 22, 2021, <https://www.rescue.org/report/gbv-trends-among-rohingya-refugees-coxs-bazar-covid-19-update>.

²⁶ "UNHCR and UNDP Agree on Text of MoU with Myanmar to Support the Creation of Conditions for the Return of Rohingya Refugees," *UNHCR*, May 31, 2018, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/press/2018/5/5b0fff7b4/unhcr-undp-agree-text-mou-myanmar-support-creation-conditions-return-rohingya.html>.

²⁷ "Rohingya Refugees Reject U.N.-Myanmar Repatriation Agreement," *The Guardian*, July 5, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/06/rohingya-refugees-reject-un-myanmar-repatriation-agreement>.

²⁸ Dominic Faulder, "Myanmar Violence, Hunger and Ruin Risk Deeper Refugee Crisis," *Nikkei Asia*, May 31, 2021, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Asia-Insight/Myanmar-violence-hunger-and-ruin-risk-deeper-refugee-crisis>.



Possible Solutions

Repatriation

One seemingly long-term solution would be to ensure the safe return of the Rohingya to the Rakhine State in Myanmar. However, the Tatmadaw, currently in power, does not recognize the legitimacy of the Rohingya's identity or claim to statehood, and were the primary perpetrators behind the original violence.²⁹ Any path to repatriation would have to include full citizenship and credible human rights protections.

Resettlement

The refugee camps currently housing the Rohingya are precarious, unsafe, and unsustainable. Viable options for Rohingya unable to return to Myanmar would be establishing living situations emphasizing longevity or providing pathways to citizenship or protected status in other countries.

Military intervention

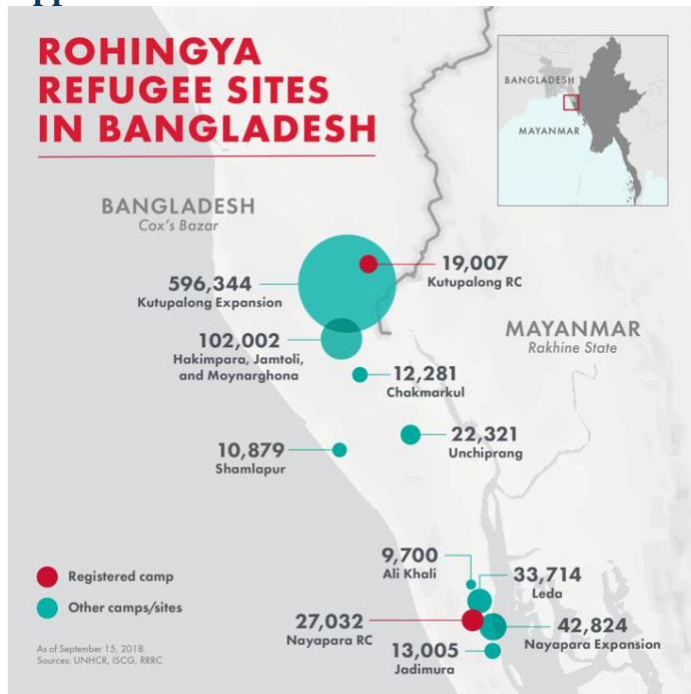
Potential mechanisms for enforcement of proposed measures include military engagement, such as the deployment of international peacekeeping forces. There exists precedent for such action in the face of ethnic cleansing: in 1999, the Kosovo War ended with NATO air strikes in "Operation Allied Force."³⁰ The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) could serve as justification for boots on the ground.

²⁹ "Myanmar Junta Leader Casts Doubt on Return of Rohingya," *Reuters*, May 24, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/myanmar-junta-leader-casts-doubt-return-rohingya-2021-05-24/>; Jessica Olney and Shabbir Ahmad, "Beyond the Coup in Myanmar: The Views of Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh," *Just Security*, June 10, 2021,

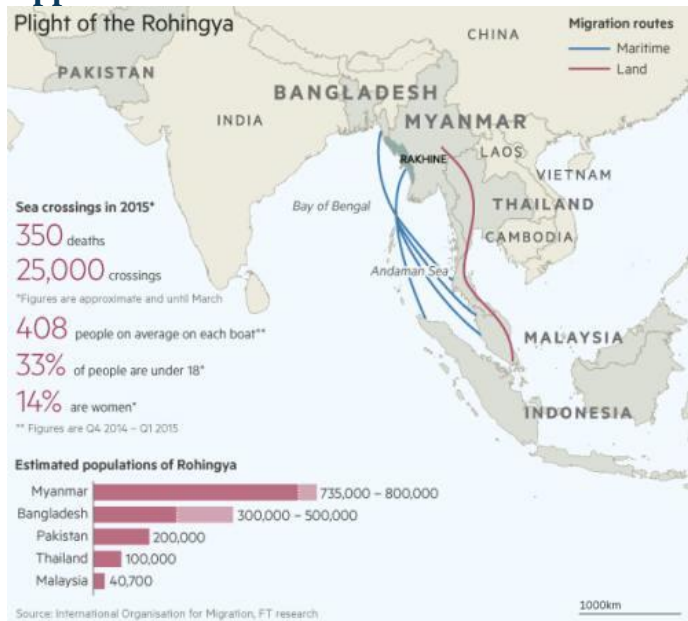
<https://www.justsecurity.org/76857/beyond-the-coup-in-myanmar-the-views-of-rohingya-refugees-in-bangladesh/>.
³⁰ Rep. Eliot Engel and Ilir Zherka, "Lessons from the 1999 U.S. Military Intervention in Kosovo," *The Hill*, March 24, 2019, <https://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/foreign-policy/435462-lessons-from-the-1999-us-military-intervention-in-kosovo>.



Appendix Appendix A³¹



Appendix B³²



³¹ "The Facts: Rohingya Refugee Crisis," *Mercy Corps*, April 09, 2020, <https://www.mercycorps.org/blog/rohingya-refugee-crisis-facts>.

³² Michael Peel, "The Unwanted Rohingya Refugees Dumped at Sea," *Financial Times*, May 22, 2015, <https://www.ft.com/content/e3544ca8-006e-11e5-a908-00144feabdc0>.



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The question of the Uyghur population in the People's Republic of China

Introduction

The Uyghur people are an ethnic, cultural, and religious minority native to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in Northwest China. They are a mostly Muslim Turkic ethnic group with their own language and cultural practices. Uyghurs make up less than half of the population of Xinjiang due to increased state-orchestrated mass migration of Han Chinese, China's ethnic majority, into Xinjiang.³³

Following reports of mass involuntary internment of Uyghurs in so-called “re-education facilities”³⁴ as well as forced mass sterilization of Uyghur women, family separation practices, and other measures aimed at breaking the group's cultural traditions, several nations have accused the People's Republic of China (PRC) of committing genocide against the Uyghur minority.³⁵ A UN human rights committee said in 2018 that it had credible reports that the PRC was detaining up to one million people in its internment facilities in Xinjiang.³⁶ In 2020, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute reported

evidence of the existence of more than 380 of these facilities in Xinjiang, an increase of 40% from prior estimates.³⁷

Beijing has been under strong international criticism from the international community for its treatment of Uyghurs for years. While Chinese officials have reported that the compounds are “vocational education centers”³⁸ intended to stop the spread of religious extremism and terrorist attacks, several other nations, including many in the West, have described the treatment of the Uyghur population as genocide.³⁹

Definition of Key Terms

Uyghurs

Also spelled Uygur or Uighur, but most members of the group prefer the spelling “Uyghur,” which is a closer approximation of the proper pronunciation in their native language, as opposed to older Western

³³ “Who Are the Uyghurs and Why Is China Being Accused of Genocide?,” BBC News, BBC, June 21, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-22278037>.

³⁴ Stephanie Nebehay, “U.N. Calls on China to Free Uighurs from Alleged Re-Education Camps,” Reuters, Thomson Reuters, August 30, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-rights-un/u-n-calls-on-china-to-free-uighurs-from-alleged-re-education-camps-idUSKCN1LF1D6>.

³⁵ Ben Westcott and Rebecca Wright, “Exclusive: New Report Claims Evidence of Beijing's 'Intent to Destroy' Uyghur People,” CNN, Cable News Network, March 10, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/03/09/asia/china-uyghurs-xinjiang-genocide-report-intl-hnk/index.html>.

³⁶ Stephanie Nebehay, “U.N. Says It Has Credible Reports That China Holds Million Uighurs in Secret Camps,” Reuters,

Thomson Reuters, August 10, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-rights-un/u-n-says-it-has-credible-reports-that-china-holds-million-uighurs-in-secret-camps-idUSKBN1KV1SU>.

³⁷ Vicky Xiuzhong Xu et al., “Uyghurs for Sale,” Australian Strategic Policy Institute, The Australian Strategic Policy Institute Limited, March 1, 2020, www.aspi.org.au/report/uyghurs-sale.

³⁸ Margaret Besheer, “China Pushes Back Over Scrutiny of Uyghur Rights at U.N. Event,” Voice of America, U.S. Agency for Global Media, May 11, 2021,

<https://www.voanews.com/east-asia-pacific/voa-news-china/china-pushes-back-over-scrutiny-uyghur-rights-un-event>.

³⁹ Besheer, “China Pushes Back Over Scrutiny of Uyghur Rights at U.N. Event.”



romanizations of the word.⁴⁰ Approximately 12 million Uyghurs, mostly Muslim, live in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in the PRC.⁴¹

Genocide

Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group:

1. Killing members of the group.
2. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group.
3. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.
4. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group.
5. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.⁴²

Refugee

The 1951 Refugee Convention defines a refugee as “someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.”⁴³

Internally Displaced Persons

The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement define internally displaced people as “persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual

residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized border.”⁴⁴

Background Information

Uyghur Origins and History

Ever since the great migration of the Turkic peoples from the Mongolian steppes beginning in the sixth century, Uyghurs have lived in eastern Turkestan, one of the Turkic-speaking states of the Russian Empire and the former Soviet Union.⁴⁵ Islam in its Sufi form became the dominant religion, overtaking Buddhism, by the 11th century. Early modern Uyghur history was dominated by Islamic city states ruled by caliphs, temporal rulers, and spiritual leaders of Naqshbandi Sufi orders. The peak of Sufi supremacy started in the late 16th century when the region fell under the rule of the Khojas—powerful political figures who were also spiritual leaders of the Naqshbandi order. In 1679, Appaq Khoja took power in Kashgar. The family tombs contained in his mausoleum are still venerated by Uyghurs.⁴⁶

The final Khoja rulers were overthrown in 1759 by the forces of the Qing dynasty as it expanded into Inner and Central Asia. The Qing dynasty was the ruling house of China from 1644 until 1911. Its ruling elite ruled with the assistance of Mongolian allies and Han Chinese officials. Only in the mid-18th century did eastern Turkestan come within the territory of the Chinese Empire. The Qing government began to refer to the region in Chinese as *Xin jiang* (the new frontier)

⁴⁰ Rachel Vandenbrink, “‘Uyghur’ or ‘Uighur’?,” Radio Free Asia, Radio Free Asia, September 10, 2010, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/uyghur-spelling-09062010161733.html>.

⁴¹ “Who Are the Uyghurs,” BBC News.

⁴² “Genocide,” United Nations, United Nations, accessed July 4, 2021,

<https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide.shtml>.

⁴³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “Text of the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees,”

UNHCR, July 28, 1951, www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html.

⁴⁴ United Nations Commission on Human Rights, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, (New York: United Nations Commission on Human Rights, 1998).

⁴⁵ Michael Dillon, “A Uighurs' History of China,” History Today, January 2020,

<https://www.historytoday.com/archive/behind-times/uighurs%E2%80%99-history-china>.

⁴⁶ Dillon, “A Uighurs' History of China.”



and established military and bureaucratic organizations. Their rule was not without resistance; there were several revolts in the 19th century. Eastern Turkestan was formally incorporated into the Chinese Empire as the province of Xinjiang in November 1884.⁴⁷

In 1949, the PRC was established by Mao Zedong on behalf of the Chinese Communist Party.⁴⁸ Resistance against this move continued into the 1950s, principally in southern Xinjiang. In 1955, the PRC established the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, similar to the arrangements for Tibet and Inner Mongolia.⁴⁹

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Turkic people in Central Asia formed independent nations in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. There was no equivalent liberation for the Uyghurs. Frustration led to an increase in resistance by militant groups inside Xinjiang and others in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Pakistan.⁵⁰ Demonstrations in 1995 in Yining provoked Beijing to identify the conflict in Xinjiang as the most serious threat to the Chinese state and initiate a ‘Strike Hard’ campaign against resisters. Another Yining demonstration in the north-east of the state was violently suppressed in 1997.⁵¹

The repression initiated under the ‘Strike Hard’ campaign became permanent in Xinjiang. Anyone suspected of sympathies for ‘separatism’ or involvement in ‘illegal religious activities’ could be detained without trial, and any attempts by family members to extract relatives from detention facilities led to clashes with authorities. Sporadic attacks against police by local people or armed militant groups were followed by government reprisals.

⁴⁷ Dillon.

⁴⁸“The Chinese Revolution of 1949,” Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State, accessed August 18, 2021, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/chinese-rev>.

⁴⁹ Dillon, “A Uighurs’ History of China.”

⁵⁰ Dillon.

⁵¹“Xinjiang, China’s Restive Northwest,” Human Rights Watch, accessed August 18, 2021, https://www.hrw.org/legacy/campaigns/china-98/sj_xnj2.htm.

⁵² Dillon, “A Uighurs’ History of China.”

Though most conflict occurred in old Sufi strongholds south of Xinjiang, in July 2009 clashes between Uyghurs and Han Chinese in Urumqi cost many lives and resulted in the detention of thousands of Uyghurs, some of whom were executed.⁵² The level of repression prompted widespread international concerns about human rights abuses.

Conformity under Xi Jinping

In November 2012, Xi Jinping was appointed General-Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party and to the less powerful office of President in March 2013. He emphasized conformity and uniformity under his leadership. In August 2016, he appointed Chen Quanguo as Xinjiang Party Secretary. Chen rapidly introduced so-called ‘counter-terrorism’ measures, including internment camps and advanced surveillance technology employed in Xinjiang. Satellite images indicate that many mosques and Sufi shrines have been destroyed, including the Imam Asim shrine outside Khotan, the site of an annual festival attended by thousands of pious Uyghur Muslims.⁵³

China’s Economy

Much talk of the PRC’s economy since 2013 has surrounded the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), an expansive plan which aims to create an open economic zone in Eurasia and the Middle East. The initiative involves an ambitious collection of infrastructure projects which include railways, energy pipelines, highways, and border crossings to bolster trade between China and neighboring countries. The large scope of the project would connect 65 countries collectively representing 30% of global nominal GDP.⁵⁴ Xinjiang is a critical location along the BRI

⁵³ Chris Buckley and Austin Ramzy, “China Is Erasing Mosques and Precious Shrines in Xinjiang,” *The New York Times*, *The New York Times*, September 25, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/09/25/world/asia/xinjiang-china-religious-site.html>.

⁵⁴ Raina Zhao, “Persecution for Profit: China’s Economic Strategy in Xinjiang,” ed. Alex Cheng, *Berkeley Economic Review*, University of California, Berkeley, October 22, 2019, <https://econreview.berkeley.edu/persecution-for-profit-chinas-economic-strategy-in-xinjiang/>.



as key routes cut through the region; for example, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor links China to the Pakistani port of Gwadar via Xinjiang. *China Daily*, a state-run paper, has called the region “a crucial gateway for the Belt and Road Initiative... its land border with seven countries means it is best placed to expand China’s trade and ties not only with these neighboring nations, but also with Europe and beyond.”⁵⁵ *China Daily* has also noted that almost all trade from Central Asia passes through Xinjiang, and that Beijing hopes to create a transportation and commercial hub there in the future.⁵⁶

In the past, the international community has expressed concern over well-documented allegations that minority groups in the Xinjiang region are being coerced into labor in the textile industry. While the Chinese government has denied the claims and called textile factories in Xinjiang part of a “poverty alleviation” scheme, leaked government documents consisting of a mixture of government policy papers and state news reports revealed that the prefectures of Aksu and Hotan sent 210,000 labor-transferred workers to pick cotton for a Chinese paramilitary organization, the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, in 2018. Given that Xinjiang accounts for 85% of China’s cotton supply and 20% of the world’s cotton, a large portion of the textile industry could be benefiting from exploited Uyghur labor.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Faisal Kidwai, “Xinjiang Rides High on Belt and Road Initiative,” *China Daily*, China Daily Information Co., August 8, 2018, <https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201808/08/WS5b6a649ba310add14f384a0c.html>.

⁵⁶ Kidwai, “Xinjiang Rides High on Belt and Road Initiative.”

⁵⁷ John Sudworth, “China’s ‘Tainted’ Cotton,” *BBC News*, BBC, December 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/extra/nz0g306v8c/china-tainted-cotton>.

⁵⁸ Dru C. Gladney, “The Chinese Program of Development and Control, 1978–2001,” in *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Frederick Starr. (London: Routledge, 2015): 101-119.

Major Countries and Organizations

People’s Republic of China

Uyghurs are classified as a National Minority under Chinese law, meaning they are considered no more indigenous to Xinjiang than the Han and have no special rights to the land.⁵⁸ An estimated over 100,000 Uyghurs are currently held in political “re-education camps.”⁵⁹ China justifies these measures as a preemptive response to terrorist threats posed by extremist separatist groups. Recently, there have been attempts to restrict the Uyghur birth rate and increase the Han fertility rate in portions of Xinjiang to counter Uyghur separatism.⁶⁰

Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan has the largest Uyghur diaspora outside of the PRC and ethnic Kazakhs are the largest group after Uyghurs to be subjected to the questionable policies implemented by the Chinese state. However, Kazakhstan’s foreign policies over the last twenty years have made it economically and politically dependent on China. From its independence, Kazakhstan has balanced its international relations, adopting what former president Nursultan Nazarbayev called ‘multi-vector foreign policy.’ While this strategy has historically manifested in Kazakhstan balancing its trade and investment between Russia and the West, the ‘multi-vector’ policy was gradually expanded to China starting in the late 1990s.⁶¹ Because of these political and

⁵⁹ Tom Phillips, “China ‘Holding at Least 120,000 Uighurs in Re-Education Camps,’” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, January 25, 2018,

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/25/at-least-120000-muslim-uighurs-held-in-chinese-re-education-camps-report>.

⁶⁰ Wei Shan and Gang Chen, *China’s Flawed Policy in Xinjiang and Its Dilemmas* (Singapore: National University of Singapore, 2009).

⁶¹ Sean R Roberts, “Kazakhstan’s Ambiguous Position towards the Uyghur Cultural Genocide in China,” *The Asan Forum*, The Asan Institute for Policy Studies, accessed August 18, 2021, <https://theasanforum.org/kazakhstans-ambiguous-position-towards-the-uyghur-cultural-genocide-in-china/>.



economic ties, the Kazakh government has avoided recognizing the human rights crisis in China.

Pakistan

Pakistan is home to a small community of Uyghurs originating from Xinjiang. The country became a transit point for Uyghurs making pilgrimage on the *hajj* in the 1980s.⁶² Many of these Uyghurs returning from their pilgrimage decided to settle down in Pakistan, forming more permanent communities. As of 2020, Uyghur population estimates are between 2,000 to 3,000 people.⁶³

Pakistan has been accused of signing extradition treaties and arresting individuals at China's request in exchange for development assistance. Large development projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) have reportedly been used by the Chinese government to secure Pakistani support against Uyghurs.⁶⁴ Pakistan has publicly rebuked critics of the PRC.

Afghanistan

⁶² Ziad Haider, "Sino-Pakistan Relations and Xinjiang's Uyghurs: Politics, Trade, and Islam along the Karakoram Highway," *Asian Survey* 45, no. 4 (2005): 522–45, <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2005.45.4.522>.

⁶³ Maija Liuhto, "China Is after Us': Uyghurs in Pakistan Report Intimidation," Aljazeera, Al Jazeera Media Network, January 14, 2019, <https://web.archive.org/web/20201125233836/https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2019/01/14/china-is-after-us-uyghurs-in-pakistan-report-intimidation/>.

⁶⁴ Bradley Jardine and Robert Evans, "Nets Cast from the Earth to the Sky': China's Hunt for Pakistan's Uyghurs," Uyghur Human Rights Project, August 11, 2021, <https://uhrp.org/report/nets-cast-from-the-earth-to-the-sky-chinas-hunt-for-pakistans-uyghurs/>.

⁶⁵ Haiyun Ma and I-wei Jennifer Chang, "For Them, Afghanistan Is Safer than China," *Foreign Policy*, The Slate Group, November 1, 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/11/01/for-them-afghanistan-is-safer-than-china/>.

⁶⁶ "China's Ties to Taliban Warm Ahead of Us Leaving Afghanistan," AP News, Associated Press, July 28, 2021,

Uyghur populations in Afghanistan are estimated at around 4,500. China has been in regular talks with Taliban leadership, even hosting meetings between China's foreign minister and a delegation of high-level Taliban officials.⁶⁵ China and Afghanistan share a border in the remote Wakhan Valley, and this is a cause of concern for the Chinese government, which worries about possible spillover of Islamic militancy into Xinjiang.⁶⁶ Members of the Pakistani government have referred to China's Belt and Road Initiative as a possible incentive for Taliban cooperation regarding Uyghurs and bordering countries.⁶⁷

United States of America

The United States Congress passed the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act in reaction to the internment camps.⁶⁸ Lawmakers also proposed the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, an act which required the assumption that all Xinjiang goods are created with forced labor and therefore banned.⁶⁹ The U.S. Department of Homeland Security blocked imports of products from five entities in Xinjiang to combat the use of forced labor in September 2020.⁷⁰

<https://apnews.com/article/china-taliban-1e40c629c150505a107b2e05c3a9b0cc>.

⁶⁷ Jardine and Evans, "Nets Cast from the Earth to the Sky."

⁶⁸ Owen Churchill and Kristin Huang, "China Protests as U.S. House Passes Uyghur Bill Demanding Sanctions over Xinjiang," *South China Morning Post*, Alibaba, December 4, 2019,

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3040466/us-house-passes-uygur-law-demanding-sanctions-china-over-human>.

⁶⁹ David Brunnstrom, "U.S. Lawmakers Seek to Tighten Ban on Forced-Labor Goods from China's Xinjiang," *Reuters*, Thomson Reuters, March 11, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-xinjiang-labor/us-lawmakers-seek-to-tighten-ban-on-forced-labor-goods-from-chinas-xinjiang-idUSKBN20Y2DQ>.

⁷⁰ "DHS Cracks down on Goods Produced by China's State-Sponsored Forced Labor," U.S. Department of Homeland Security, September 14, 2020,

<https://www.dhs.gov/news/2020/09/14/dhs-cracks-down-goods-produced-china-s-state-sponsored-forced-labor>.



In July 2021, American Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin commented on "genocide and crimes against humanity against Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang" while speaking at the Singaporean branch of the International Institute for Strategic Studies.⁷¹

Turkey

The Turkish Foreign Ministry issued a statement in 2019 condemning China's "reintroduction of concentration camps in the 21st century." A spokesperson for the Turkish Foreign Ministry also stated that "more than one million Uyghur Turks incurring arbitrary arrests are subjected to torture and political brainwashing in internment camps and prisons."⁷²

In March 2021, the Turkish parliament rejected a motion to label the PRC's treatment of Uyghurs a genocide.⁷³ On July 13, 2021, Prime Minister Erdogan told President Xi Jinping in a telephone call that Uyghur Muslims should live in peace as "equal citizens of China" but reaffirmed Turkey's respect for China's territorial integrity and sovereignty.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Tara Copp, "We Will Not Flinch: Austin Promises Us Will Continue to Bolster Taiwan's Self-Defense," Defense One, Government Media Executive Group LLC, July 27, 2021, <https://www.defenseone.com/policy/2021/07/we-will-not-flinch-austin-promises-us-will-continue-bolster-taiwans-self-defense/184058/>.

⁷² Amy Qin, "Turkey Urges China to End Mass Detention of Muslims," The New York Times, The New York Times, February 10, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/10/world/asia/china-turkey-uyghurs.html>.

⁷³ Paul Eckert, "Dismaying Uyghurs, Legislatures of Australia and Turkey Reject Motions on China Genocide Label," trans. Alim Seytoff and Mamatjan Juma, Radio Free Asia, U.S. Agency for Global Media, March 15, 2021, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/turkey-australia-genocide-03152021185120.html>.

⁷⁴ Tuvan Gumrukcu, "Turkey's Erdogan, China's Xi Discuss Uyghurs in Phone Call -Turkish Presidency," ed. Nick Tattersall, Reuters, Thomson Reuters, July 13, 2021, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210713183408/https://www.reuters.com/world/china/turkeys-erdogan-chinas-xi-discuss-uyghurs-phone-call-turkish-presidency-2021-07-13/>.

⁷⁵ Michael Savage, "Block China's Seat on Human Rights Council over Uighurs, Urges Lisa Nandy," The Guardian,

United Kingdom

Lisa Nandy, Britain's Shadow Foreign Secretary, suggested in October 2020 that Britain oppose giving China a seat on the UNHRC to protest its abuses of Uyghur Muslims. Additionally, she urged the UN to inquire into crimes against humanity in Xinjiang.⁷⁵ In September 2020, more than 120 MPs and peers signed a letter which accused China of a "systematic and calculated program of ethnic cleansing" against the country's Uyghur Muslim minority.⁷⁶ In January 2021, foreign secretary Dominic Raab accused China of "extensive and invasive surveillance targeting minorities, systematic restrictions on Uyghur culture, education, and the practice of Islam, and the widespread use of forced labor."⁷⁷

The U.K. and the E.U. sanctioned four Chinese officials in March 2021 for their involvement in violating the human rights of Uyghurs in Xinjiang.⁷⁸ China responded by imposing sanctions on nine U.K. citizens for spreading "lies and disinformation."⁷⁹ On the 22nd of April 2021, The House of Commons

Guardian News and Media, October 10, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/10/block-chinas-seat-on-human-rights-council-over-uyghurs-urges-lisa-nandy>.

⁷⁶ Cahal Milmo, "MPs Compare China to Nazis as Beijing Is Accused of 'Systematic Ethnic Cleansing' of Uighurs," inews.co.uk, Associated Newspapers Limited, September 9, 2020, <https://inews.co.uk/news/world/mps-china-nazi-germany-systematic-ethnic-cleansing-uyghur-muslims-640387>.

⁷⁷ Patrick Wintour, "China's Treatment of Uighurs Amounts to Torture, Says Dominic Raab," The Guardian, Guardian News and Media, January 12, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/12/chinas-treatment-of-uyghurs-amounts-to-torture-dominic-raab>.

⁷⁸ Robin Emmott and David Brunnstrom, "West Sanctions China over Xinjiang Abuses, Beijing Hits Back at E.U.," Reuters, Thomson Reuters, March 22, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-usa-china-eu-sanctions-idUSKBN2BE2LF>.

⁷⁹ Ben Blanchard et al., "'Badge of Honour' - China Sanctions U.K. Politicians for Xinjiang 'Lies'," ed. Richard Pullin, Karishma Singh, and Nick Macfie, Reuters, Thomson Reuters, March 25, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-china-britain-xinjiang-idUSKBN2BH3LK>.



unanimously passed a non-binding parliamentary motion classifying the PRC's human rights abuses in Xinjiang as genocide.⁸⁰

Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and the Philippines

Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and the Philippines have publicly supported China's policies;⁸¹ Thailand, Malaysia, and Cambodia have all deported Uyghur people at China's request.⁸² In 2020, Malaysia minister Mohd Redzuan Md Yusof said that Malaysia would not entertain requests from Beijing to extradite Uyghurs if they felt their safety was at risk.⁸³

Ukraine

Ukraine originally signed onto a June 22, 2021, statement to the UNHRC calling for independent observers to be provided immediate access to Xinjiang. However, it withdrew its signature two days later after Ukrainian lawmakers stated that the policy change was due to China threatening to block a scheduled shipment of at least 500,000 COVID-19 vaccines.⁸⁴

United Nations Human Rights Council

Although United Nations Human Rights officials have expressed "serious concerns about the alleged detention and forced labor of Muslim Uyghurs in China,"⁸⁵ there is little that the UNHRC can do to

investigate or aid China's Uyghur population due the PRC's position in the United Nations Security Council (see "Previous Solutions").

Uyghur Human Rights Project

The Uyghur Human Rights Project is a group which promotes the rights of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslim peoples in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region through research-based advocacy. Founded in 2004 as a project of the Uyghur American Association and transformed into a nonprofit organization in 2016, the UHRP publishes "reports and analysis in English and Chinese to defend Uyghurs' civil, political, social, cultural, and economic rights according to international human rights standards."⁸⁶

World Uyghur Congress

The World Uyghur Congress (WUC) is an international organization that claims to represent "the collective interest of the Uyghur people both in East Turkistan and abroad." The WUC was established on April 16, 2004. Its main objective is "to promote the right of the Uyghur people to use peaceful, nonviolent, and democratic means to determine the political future of East Turkistan."⁸⁷

Human Rights Watch

September 4, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-malaysia-china-uyghur-idUSKBN25V1KE>.

⁸⁴ Yevhen Solonyna and Reid Standish, "China Used Vaccines, Trade to Get Ukraine to Drop Support for Xinjiang Scrutiny," Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, July 28, 2021, <https://web.archive.org/web/20210728153610/https://www.rferl.org/a/china-vaccines-ukraine-xinjiang/31382099.html>.

⁸⁵ "China: U.N. Experts Deeply Concerned by Alleged Detention, Forced Labour of Uyghurs," OHCHR, The United Nations, March 29, 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26957&LangID=E>.

⁸⁶ "About," Uyghur Human Rights Project, Uyghur Human Rights Project, accessed August 19, 2021, <https://uhrp.org/about/>.

⁸⁷ "Who We Are," World Uyghur Congress, World Uyghur Congress, accessed August 19, 2021, <https://www.uyghurcongress.org/en/introducing-the-world-uyghur-congress/>.

⁸⁰ Greg Heffer, "House of Commons Declares Uighurs Are Being Subjected to Genocide in China," Sky News, Sky U.K., April 22, 2021, <https://news.sky.com/story/house-of-commons-declares-uighurs-are-being-subjected-to-genocide-in-china-12283995>.

⁸¹ Tamara Qiblawi, "Muslim Nations Are Defending China as It Cracks down on Muslims, Shattering Any Myths of Islamic Solidarity," CNN, Cable News Network, July 17, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/07/17/asia/uyghurs-muslim-countries-china-intl/index.html>.

⁸² Pjotr Sauer, "If They Send Us Back to China We Will Die': Uighur Brothers Fight Deportation From Russia," The Moscow Times, The Moscow Times, October 9, 2019, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/10/09/if-they-send-us-back-to-china-we-will-die-uighur-brothers-fight-deportation-from-russia-a67646>.

⁸³ Joseph Sipalan, "Malaysia Won't Extradite Uighurs to China, Minister Says," ed. Martin Petty, Reuters, Thomson Reuters,



In April 2021, Human Rights Watch, in collaboration with the Stanford Human Rights & Conflict Resolution Clinic, published a report outlining "that the Chinese government has committed — and continues to commit — crimes against humanity against the Turkic Muslim population."⁸⁸ The report set out recommendations for concerned governments and the UN.

Timeline of Key Events

| Date | Description of Event |
|------|----------------------|
|------|----------------------|

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| August 9, 2019 | The final version of the letter backing the PRC's policies includes the following signatories: see Appendix A. |
|-----------------------|--|

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| July 8, 2019 | A group of 22 states issues a joint letter condemning China's mass detention of Uyghurs and other minorities in the Xinjiang region to the 41st session of the UNHRC. Signatories of this letter: see Appendix B. |
|---------------------|---|

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| August 13, 2018 | Hu Lianhe, China's leading counter-terror expert, confirms the existence of the internment program at the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. |
|------------------------|---|

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| March 4, 2017 | XUAR Department of Justice issues a directive ordering the establishment of transformation centers throughout southern Xinjiang. |
|----------------------|--|

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| February 1, 2015 | XUAR authorities begin outlawing Islamic veils in all public spaces in the capital of Ürümqi. Officials justify this decision as part of an effort to defeat Islamic extremism. |
|-------------------------|---|

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| May 1, 2014 | The campaign of re-education begins when the Xinjiang regional government demands that Uyghur migrants in Ürümqi return to their hometowns to obtain a new ID card. The introduction of the People's Convenience Card or <i>bianminka</i> from mid-2014 effectively restricts the mobility of most rural-born Uyghur migrants, who are not eligible for the card. |
|--------------------|---|

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| October 28, 2013 | The first alleged Uyghur-led act of political violence is reported outside of the XUAR, as three Uyghurs drive a truck into a crowd in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, killing five and injuring 42. Authorities blame the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) for the attack. |
|-------------------------|---|

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 2010 | In the year after the Ürümqi riots, XUAR officials reported that "40,000 high-definition surveillance cameras with riot-proof protective shells had been installed throughout the region." |
|-------------|--|

⁸⁸“ Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots,” Human Rights Watch, April 19, 2021,

<https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/19/break-their-lineage-break-their-roots/chinas-crimes-against-humanity-targeting#>.



- July 5, 2009** The Ürümqi Riots kill over 197 and injure over 1,721, according to official government figures. Over 1,000 people are arrested, mosques are temporarily closed, and internet and telephone communications are severely restricted.
- 2008** Beijing hosts the 2008 Summer Olympics. 1,300 Uyghurs are arrested for “state security crimes,” including charges of terrorism, substantially more than in previous years.

- Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (January 1951)

Main Issues

Involuntary internment

China’s government has detained at least one million Uyghurs in internment camps in Xinjiang since around 2017. Satellite images indicate at least 85 camps in the province.⁸⁹ The Chinese government, ruled by the Communist Party of China (CCP), claims that the camps are “re-education camps” which deliver “a curriculum that includes standard spoken and written Chinese, understanding of the law, vocational skills, and deradicalization.”⁹⁰ The CCP claims the facilities are part of an effort to battle terrorism and enhance national security, pointing to attacks committed by Uyghur militants in 2013 and 2014.⁹¹

Reports indicate that Chinese authorities forcibly removed Uyghurs from their homes and put them in arbitrary detention without criminal charges in internment camps. The Associated Press has reported that reports given to the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists by an anonymous source show evidence of torture, sexual harassment, and forced labor at the camps, in an effort to coerce Uyghurs to denounce their culture and religion.⁹²

Forced sterilization

Chinese authorities are allegedly imposing forced birth control on Uyghur women. Methods have allegedly included the insertion of IUDs, forced abortions, and mass sterilizations. Such measures

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (July 2011)
- UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (November 1989)
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (February 1985)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (December 1979)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (December 1966)
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (November 1963)

⁸⁹ Bryan Wood, “What Is Happening with the Uighurs in China?,” PBS, accessed July 4, 2021, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/features/uighurs/>.

⁹⁰ 杨希, “III. Content of Education and Training,” *Govt. White Papers (China Internet Information Center)*, accessed July 4, 2021, http://www.china.org.cn/government/whitepaper/2019-08/19/content_75114398.htm.

⁹¹ “Why Is There Tension between China and the Uighurs?,” BBC News, last modified September 26, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-26414014>.

⁹² “Secret Documents Reveal How China Mass Detention Camps Work,” AP NEWS, Associated Press, November 25, 2019, <https://apnews.com/article/china-cables-ap-top-news-international-news-china-race-and-ethnicity-4ab0b341a4ec4e648423f2ec47ea5c47>.



constitute a genocidal attempt to suppress the population.⁹³

Leaked data obtained and published in the *Journal of Political Risk* showed that of the 484 camp detainees listed in Karakax county in Xinjiang, 149 of them were detained for too many children. Time in internment facilities is a written policy in at least three counties in the PRC.⁹⁴

The Associated Press reports that in 2014, just over 200,000 IUDs were inserted in Xinjiang. By 2018, that jumped more than 60 percent to nearly 330,000 IUDs. At the same time, IUD use tumbled elsewhere in China, as many women began getting the devices removed. Chinese health statistics also show a sterilization boom in Xinjiang. Even though sterilization rates dramatically decreased in the rest of the country, they surged seven-fold in Xinjiang from 2016 to 2018, to more than 60,000 procedures. The Uyghur-majority city of Hotan budgeted for 14,872 sterilizations in 2019—over 34% of all married women of childbearing age.⁹⁵

Forced labor

Independent UN human rights experts have urged major companies to scrutinize their supply chains following concerns over the alleged detention and forced labor of Uyghurs in China. UN sources have reported receiving information which connected over 150 Chinese and foreign domiciled companies to

allegations of human rights abuses against Uyghur workers.⁹⁶

Many have also reportedly been forcibly transferred to work in factories in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, located in northwest China, and elsewhere in the country. Members of the Working Group on Business and Human Rights are among eight entities seeking to conduct fact-finding missions to China.⁹⁷

Surveillance measures

The CCP allegedly used software hidden within apps as well as websites to gather data on its Uyghur population as early as 2013.⁹⁸ Spending on internal security in Xinjiang totaled nearly \$8.4 billion in 2017, six times as much as in 2012. This spending included funds for surveillance, personnel, and internment camps.⁹⁹

According to IPVM, Hikvision has received contracts in Xinjiang worth at least \$290 million for its cameras and facial recognition systems.¹⁰⁰ Huawei, the Chinese tech company that the United States has described as a security threat, has also been capitalizing on the demand for increased security in Xinjiang, signing agreements with regional law enforcement to develop surveillance technology. A database stored online by Chinese surveillance company SenseNets contained facial recognition records and ID scans for about 2.5 million people,

⁹³ Alanah Lockwood, “Report: China’s Forced Reproductive Policies for Uighur Women May Constitute Genocide,” Jurist, JURIST Legal News & Research Services, Inc., June 30, 2020, <https://www.jurist.org/news/2020/06/report-chinas-forced-reproductive-policies-for-uighur-women-may-constitute-genocide/>.

⁹⁴ “China Cuts Uighur Births with IUDs, Abortion, Sterilization,” AP NEWS, Associated Press, June 29, 2020, <https://apnews.com/article/ap-top-news-international-news-weekend-reads-china-health-269b3de1af34e17c1941a514f78d764c>.

⁹⁵ “China Cuts Uighur Births,” AP NEWS.

⁹⁶ “Rights Experts Concerned about Alleged Detention, Forced Labour of Uyghurs in China,” United Nations, United Nations, March 29, 2021,

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/03/1088612>.

⁹⁷ “Rights Experts Concerned about Alleged Detention,” United Nations.

⁹⁸ Paul Mozur and Nicole Perloth, “China’s Software Stalked Uighurs Earlier and More Widely, Researchers Learn,” The New York Times, The New York Times, July 1, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/01/technology/china-uighurs-hackers-malware-hackers-smartphones.html>.

⁹⁹ Chris Buckley and Paul Mozur, “How China Uses High-Tech Surveillance to Subdue Minorities,” The New York Times, The New York Times, May 22, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/22/world/asia/china-surveillance-xinjiang.html>.

¹⁰⁰ Charles Rollet, “Dahua and Hikvision Win Over \$1 Billion In Government-Backed Projects In Xinjiang,” IPVM, April 23, 2018, <https://ipvm.com/reports/xinjiang-dahua-hikvision>.



mostly in Urumqi, a city with a population of about 3.5 million.¹⁰¹

Previous Solutions

European Union

European Union ambassadors agreed on sanctions against four Chinese officials and one Chinese entity for human rights abuses against Uyghurs in March 2021.¹⁰² In the same month, negotiations for a group of Ambassadors from European Union countries to visit Xinjiang halted due to the PRC's denial of the E.U.'s request to visit Ilham Tohti, an imprisoned Uyghur scholar.¹⁰³

World Medical Association

The World Medical Association (WMA) is an independent international confederation of free professional medical associations representing physicians worldwide. In October 2020, the 71st WMA General Assembly adopted a resolution on human rights violations against the Uyghur people in China. The resolution called on “constituent members, physicians, and the international health community to formally condemn the treatment of the Uyghurs in China’s Xinjiang region and support the requests made in the July 2019 letter to the UN Human Rights Council High Commissioner calling for international independent observers to be allowed into the Xinjiang region of China.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Buckley and Mozur, “How China Uses High-Tech Surveillance to Subdue Minorities.”

¹⁰² Robin Emmott, “E.U. Envoys Agree First China Sanctions in Three Decades,” Reuters, Thomson Reuters, March 17, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-eu-china-sanctions-idUSKBN2B91DC>.

¹⁰³ “E.U. Visit to Xinjiang Stalls over Access,” Taipei Times, March 18, 2021, <https://www.taipetimes.com/News/world/archives/2021/03/18/2003754059>.

¹⁰⁴ “WMA Resolution on Human Rights Violations Against Uighur People in China,” The World Medical Association, The World Medical Association, Inc., November 10, 2020,

United Nations

Due to the structure of the United Nations Security Council, it has been difficult for UN bodies to pass resolutions on the matter of the PRC’s treatment of Uyghurs within its borders. Decisions of the International Criminal Court (ICC), as well as UNSC resolutions, are legally binding under international law. The ICC prosecutes four crimes: genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and crimes of aggression. For the ICC to charge a state or state national with genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, the state in question must consent to the ICC’s jurisdiction; under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the ICC may exercise jurisdiction over a state or state individual’s crimes if they were referred to ICC prosecutors by the UNSC.¹⁰⁵

China has not consented to the jurisdiction of the ICC. However, Chinese authorities may be put on trial if the UNSC were to adopt a resolution and refer it to the ICC prosecutors.¹⁰⁶ The reason this will not happen with current UNSC structure is because China is a permanent member of the UNSC and therefore may veto any attempts to adopt resolutions pertaining to its actions against Uyghurs.

Letter by Human Rights Experts

In response to information that connected over 150 domestic Chinese and foreign-domiciled companies to serious allegations of human rights abuses against Uyghur workers, a group of more than 16 independent UN human rights experts sent a letter to Chinese and multinational companies in March 2021.¹⁰⁷ In a

<https://www.wma.net/policies-post/wma-resolution-on-human-rights-violations-against-uighur-people-in-china/>.

¹⁰⁵ Alina Rizvi, “Uighur Crisis Highlights Flawed Structure of U.N. Security Council,” ed. Tim Zubizarreta, Jurist, University of Pittsburgh, July 10, 2020, <https://www.jurist.org/commentary/2020/07/alina-rizvi-unscreform-uighurs/>.

¹⁰⁶ Rizvi, “Uighur Crisis Highlights Flawed Structure of U.N. Security Council.”

¹⁰⁷ “WUC Joins Civil Society Groups to Welcome Action by U.N. Human Rights Experts on Uyghur Forced Labour,” World Uyghur Congress, World Uyghur Congress, March 30, 2021, <https://www.uyghurcongress.org/en/wuc-joins-civil-society->



subsequent press release, these experts cited “exploitative working and abusive living conditions that may constitute arbitrary detention, human trafficking, forced labor and enslavement by the use of forced labor” in workplaces both within and outside of the Uyghur Region.¹⁰⁸

Possible Solutions

Build an international coalition

One possible solution might be for like-minded countries to form a coalition to place diplomatic and economic pressure on China regarding the Uyghur issue. Many European and Asian nations, especially those 22 states listed as signatories, could work together to combine their political space and backing to confront the PRC.

It might also be worthwhile to consider coaxing major Muslim-majority nations to form part of this hypothetical coalition. Note, however, that most of these nations have been silent on the issue. Some, such as Saudi Arabia, have publicly defended the PRC’s right to territorial sovereignty.¹⁰⁹ Economic ties to China may be difficult to break in the interest of the Uyghur question.

Economic sanctions

One hypothetical solution might be to cease economic support of Chinese manufacturers who allegedly use Uyghur forced labor. According to the *New York Times*, approximately one in five pieces of cotton clothing contains cotton or other materials from Xinjiang, which produces about 84% of China’s cotton output.¹¹⁰ If several nations stopped importing products made by forced Uyghur laborers, Chinese

revenues would be lowered and perhaps the PRC could be convinced to end such labor practices.

Developmental aid

The PRC’s publicly stated goals for the Xinjiang region are to meet its economic development goals. Xinjiang is crucial for China’s economic project under Xi Jinping. The PRC’s government is concerned about security threats from Uyghur Muslim extremists and considers its severe security policies crucial to the success of China’s Belt and Road Initiative.¹¹¹ Offering aid to develop the region in exchange for third-party human rights monitoring could be a potential point of discussion.

Increase refugee quotas

Concerned governments could work together to increase quotas for the resettlement of Uyghur refugees. Furthermore, given testimony that Uyghur refugees have been denied asylum in Islamabad,¹¹² governments could put international pressure on the PRC’s neighboring countries to expedite refugee applications from Uyghurs and to refrain from deporting Uyghur refugees back to China.

Appendix

Appendix A

Algeria, Angola, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Comoros, the Congo, Cuba, DPR Korea, the DR Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Gabon, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Laos, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Russian Federation,

groups-to-welcome-action-by-un-human-rights-experts-on-uyghur-forced-labour/.

¹⁰⁸“China: U.N. Experts Deeply Concerned,” OHCHR.

¹⁰⁹ Alex Ward, “5 Real Steps the U.S. Could Take to Help Uighurs in China,” *Vox*, *Vox*, July 28, 2020, <https://www.vox.com/2020/7/28/21337081/china-uighurs-muslims-trump-forced-labor-help>.

¹¹⁰ Elizabeth Paton and Austin Ramzy, “Coalition Brings Pressure to End Forced Uighur Labor,” *The New York Times*,

The New York Times, July 23, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/23/fashion/uighur-forced-labor-cotton-fashion.html>.

¹¹¹ A. R. Imtiyaz, “Mapping Crisis and Solutions in the Uighur National Question,” *Peace Review* 32, no. 1 (2020): 51-62, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10402659.2020.1823566>.

¹¹² Jardine and Evans, “Nets Cast from the Earth to the Sky.”



Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Togo, Turkmenistan, Uganda, the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Yemen, Zambia, and Zimbabwe; as well as the observer mission of Palestine.

Appendix B

Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.



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