

EAST TURKISTAN HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH ASSOCIATION WOMEN'S REPORT

2023



ETHR

DOĞU TÜRKİSTAN İNSAN HAKLARI İZLEME DERNEĞİ
خەلقئارا ئۇيغۇر ئادەتتىكى كۆزەتكۈچى جەمئىيىتى
EAST TURKISTAN HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH ASSOCIATION
بۆيۈك تۈركىستان ئادەتتىكى كۆزەتكۈچى



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شەرقىي تۈركىستان ئىنسان ھەقلىرى كۆزىتىش جەمئىيىتى

EAST TURKISTAN HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH ASSOCIATION

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A background image showing several women wearing headscarves, with a blue horizontal band across the middle. The image is faded and serves as a backdrop for the text.

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Introduction

Forced to share the same bed with Han Chinese government officials, subjected to non-consensual medical interventions through state-imposed birth control methods, facing sexual violence at the hands of Chinese security personnel, compelled to intermarry with ethnic groups, and held in factories under inhumane conditions during their high school years are just a few examples of the inhumane, racist, and sexist practices imposed by the Chinese government on East Turkistani women. The persecution, oppression, and genocide in East Turkistan have been extensively studied from various legal and political perspectives within the international community and continue to be investigated.

However, an essential aspect of the decades-long political repression in the region is the suffering experienced by East Turkistani women. As targets due to their Muslim and Turkish ethnic identities resulting from China's assimilation policies, East Turkistani women endure the persecution differently because of their gender. Their existence and identity are criminalized in every aspect by the Chinese state, forcing East Turkistani women to engage in a struggle that costs them their lives as they seek to live with dignity, freedom, and according to their beliefs. In addition to the common challenges that come with being a woman, the pressure, persecution, and human rights violations faced by East



Turkistani women who must fight for survival as free women are unique and require greater public attention and opposition.

Without a doubt, the oppression, persecution, and human rights violations experienced by East Turkistani women, who endure an unprecedented struggle for survival as free East Turkistani women, must be a matter of public concern. The East Turkistan Human Rights Monitoring Association prepared this report to draw more attention to the suffering of East Turkistani women, to shed light on the experiences of women in the

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East Turkistani women are compelled to fight a battle that risks their lives simply to live with dignity, freedom, and in accordance with their beliefs.

region, and to present civil society efforts that can be made as a humanitarian responsibility to oppose this oppression. China's censorship and restrictions prevent transparent access to information from the region, resulting in only a small portion of the committed human rights violations being reported. As a result, it is not known how many individuals' lives have been affected by these violations and what consequences they have had on these individuals' lives in East Turkistan. However, even the limited information available illustrates the magnitude of the human rights abuses and crimes against humanity taking place in the region.



China's Policies in East Turkistan in Recent Years

The “Crackdown on Extremism Campaign,” initiated by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) government in 2014, forms the framework of the CCP’s security-focused policies in East Turkistan. This campaign encompasses a series of repressive measures and sanctions launched by the CCP government under the pretext of “fighting terrorism and maintaining public order.”¹

With the public presentation of this campaign by the CCP, the Chinese state has shown a harsher face of its historical campaigns of Sinicization, integration, and assimilation in the East Turkistan region. In this new era, steps taken have accelerated the oppression, arbitrary detentions, cultural assimilation, and human rights violations in East Turkistan through high technology and



The concept of “securitization” in international relations refers to the process where states turn political and societal issues into matters of “security,” constructing a national narrative. Previously, issues that were not perceived as security threats or did not require extraordinary measures to address can be presented by states as existential security problems, whether they are objectively a threat or not. The transformation in China’s approach to the East Turkistan issue and the Uyghur cause illustrates the securitization of this problem, where it suddenly becomes a matter of national security, leading to the implementation of harsh measures by the Chinese government.

strict surveillance mechanisms like never before. Additionally, starting from 2017, internment camps have been widely established and utilized in East Turkistan as a new tool of assimilation.¹¹

The intensified surveillance and control mechanisms associated with the campaign have led to the expansion of various security units in the region, continuous monitoring of phones, computers, religious materials, and nationalistic resources, and the arbitrary use of collected data as evidence of wrongdoing.¹¹¹

The dramatically increasing human rights violations in the region reached a point in 2017 that could not be ignored by the international community and human rights organizations. Allegations of Uighurs and other Muslim ethnic groups living in East Turkistan suddenly disappearing or not being heard from for extended periods prompted the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to address the issue. As human rights monitoring organizations and civil society groups working on

East Turkistan began to raise more awareness and as news coverage increased, the human rights violations in the region started to gain global attention and become more widely exposed.

Within these violations, there are numerous crimes ranging from arbitrary detention and imprisonment in internment camps to torture, forced assimilation, forced labor, arbitrary arrests, sexual violence, forced sterilization, and even genocide. Independent human rights groups and civil society organizations, along with countries including the United States, Canada, Belgium, the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Taiwan, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, and the European Parliament, have recognized that the events in East Turkistan should be considered as crimes against humanity and genocide.

East Turkistan is a region with limited communication opportunities due to China's efforts to conceal its oppressive and violent religious and national assimilation policies.^{IV} Despite the heavy censorship and repression by the Chinese government, there has been a growing global awareness and human rights agenda against the increasing persecution in the region in recent years. Testimonies from survivors of the camps, East Turkistanis who

have been able to leave the region, and the exposure of Xinjiang police reports^V in 2022 have provided concrete evidence of human rights violations in the region. These developments have helped shed light on the atrocities happening in East Turkistan, despite China's attempts to hide them.

Despite the Chinese government's complete denial of allegations, the exposure of state documents providing concrete evidence to the contrary has significantly undermined the credibility of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leadership.^{VI} The measures claimed to be taken to "re-educate" the population and steer them away from separatist ideas under the guise of combating terrorism and extremism are, in reality, operating as a population engineering project aimed at Sinicizing the people of East Turkistan through oppression and violence.^{VII}

In fact, documents that emerged later, which were initially denied^{VIII} by the Chinese state, revealed that the so-called "reeducation centers," allegedly established to combat terrorism, function similarly to prisons and internment camps, as shown in collective documents. This has debunked the earlier narrative and shed light on the true nature of these facilities.^{IX}

The “Crackdown on Extremism Campaign” refers to the security-focused policies initiated by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) government in May 2014 under the pretext of combating terrorism, extremism, and separatism in the East Turkistan regions. It is known that as part of this campaign, stringent security measures were implemented, and tight surveillance systems were established in East Turkistan, all under the guise of ensuring national security. These policies are believed to be used by the CCP government as a means of ethnic and religious discrimination-based repression and assimilation.

The Chinese government, particularly since 2014, has framed the issue of East Turkistan as an urgent problem by claiming that Uighurs and others living in the region have become radicalized, and that “Islamic terrorism” has increased. As a result, they began to criminal-

ize communities in East Turkistan based on their religious and ethnic identities.^x What was once considered a political and economic “issue” in East Turkistan began to be reframed as an urgent security problem requiring a strong intervention, influenced by China’s new securitization policies.

Understanding the transformation of China’s policies in East Turkistan is crucial in the context of the securitization concept. Under Xi Jinping’s leadership, the “Uighur issue” has now been portrayed as a counter-terrorism problem, and the digital mass surveillance system has been presented as a tool for the “People’s War on Terror.” As a result of this process, the Chinese state’s approach to Uighurs and other Muslim populations in East Turkistan has focused on constant monitoring, keeping them under control, negating their potential for being free individuals and actors, constructing them as subjects, and forcibly assimilating them.^{xi}

The Impact of CCP Policies on Women

Under the Chinese government's new security and counter-terrorism policies, the unique identities and existence of Uighur women in East Turkistan are effectively disregarded. They are subjected to constant surveillance, discipline, silencing of their voices, and various forms of punishment, aimed at transforming them into obedient, unquestioning Chinese citizens. The Chinese government, within the framework of these policies, attempts to reconstruct the identities of Uighur women to create compliant citizens and restrict their potential for activism within its boundaries. As part of this process of disciplining, the CCP government violates the fundamental human rights that guarantee a dignified life, suppressing the beliefs, thoughts, and sexual freedoms of women. The Chinese government's continuous interference in personal lives and the lack of recognition for the concepts of privacy and personal space has escalated the violence inherent in its security policies, pushing them into the realm of human rights violations that qualify as genocide. Therefore, the transformation of CCP policies and the human rights violations committed by

the Chinese government in the East Turkistan region are closely interconnected.

In the past decade, Women in East Turkistan have been subjected to treatment by the Chinese government that essentially threatens their existence if they do not assimilate and conform to Chinese norms. The CCP government denies criticisms that East Turkistan women face violence and oppression, along with numerous human rights violations, including women's rights. They claim that these practices are part of the education and counter-terrorism process. However, in reality, the basic rights of Uighur women are being violated. They are being detained in internment camps, separated from their children, denied the right to make decisions about their own bodies, subjected to sexual violence, and their freedom of belief and thought is disregarded. The Chinese state, on a broad scale, criminalizes their way of life, essentially nullifying the existence of women in East Turkistan.

The CCP government's securitization policies have led to the instrumentalization of various mecha-

nisms of violence, resulting in deadly and inhumane consequences, particularly for women and girls. It is evident that the repression mechanisms used against women and girls in East Turkistan focus on cultural assimilation, religious assimilation, attacks on women's bodily autonomy, and sexual crimes. Analyzing the Chinese government's counter-terrorism and security policies through the lens of women sheds light on how the identity, bodies, and family institution of women are targeted as part of the assimilation efforts in the East Turkistan region. This perspective is crucial for understanding how the region is being forcibly assimilated.

This report is based on a methodology that involves a systematic examination of both primary and secondary sources within the framework of human rights violations. This approach aims to integrate different types of sources to conduct a detailed and comprehensive analysis. Our examination encompasses state-sanctioned informal sources, official statements, leaked and reported documents, international human rights violation reports, and the testimonies and statements of women and girls who have directly experienced human rights violations.

Within the scope of this investigation, primary sources include the first-

hand accounts of individuals who have been directly involved in the events, particularly women and girls who have experienced human rights violations. These accounts consist of oral and written statements where individuals convey their experiences and observations. Such statements help us understand events from a real-time and personal perspective.

Secondary sources, on the other hand, comprise information provided by third parties who were not directly involved in the events, such as observers, researchers, and journalists. These sources encompass state-sanctioned informal sources, official statements, leaked and reported documents, and international news sources. They offer a broader perspective, allowing us to examine different aspects of the events and human rights violations.

This methodology aims to combine both primary and secondary sources and incorporate various perspectives. The analyses seek to provide a more comprehensive picture of human rights violations through the appropriate synthesis and evaluation of these different source types. The results and findings of this report have been formed through careful assessment, analysis, and interpretation of data obtained from relevant sources.

Crimes Committed Against Women in East Turkistan

Since the early 2010s, various human rights violations against Uyghur women in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), particularly in the capital city of Urumqi and across various regions of East Turkistan, have been documented by media outlets and civil society organizations. These violations range from increased religious restrictions imposed in public spaces as part of the “fight against Islamic extremism” to the torture experienced in internment camps that spread across East Turkistan starting in 2017. The intensified pressure from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) over the past decade has led to human rights abuses affecting all aspects of women’s lives. These crimes can be categorized into five fundamental areas within the scope of human rights:.

a. Religious Assimilation

- a.1. Prohibition of religious clothing such as headscarves and veils
- a.2. Ban on women entering mosques
- a.3. Hindrance of religious practices and worship

- a.4. Forced alcohol consumption

b. Cultural Assimilation

- b.1. Ban on speaking the native language
- b.2. Prohibition of traditional clothing
- b.3. Restriction of national traditions

c. Torture

- c.1. Strip searches
- c.2. Forced head shaving
- c.3. Psychological pressure and threats
- c.4. Discrimination and humiliation

d. Sexual Violence

- d.1. Forced sterilization, distribution of contraceptives
- d.2. Forced abortions
- d.3. Sexual violence, rape
- d.4. Forced marriages.

e. Violations of Basic Human Rights

- e.1. Forced labor.
- e.2. Arbitrary detention
- e.3. Exposing people to hunger
- e.4. Forced medical interventions.
- e.5. Forced use as test subjects.
- e.6. Violation of the right to privacy
- e.8. Violation of children’s rights and the right to family life

The Function of Repressive Policies on East Turkistani Women

The detention camps are one of the fundamental structures established by the Chinese government under the guise of “reeducation” to domesticate, make obedient, reconstruct identity, and dictate Chinese propaganda. Testimonies from those who have escaped these camps clearly reveal that these activities are far from being vocational training centers aimed at civilized transformation as the Chinese government claims; they are, in fact, centers of blatant brainwashing. They serve as centers for controlling individuals through physical and mental pressure, leaving no room for questioning. The continuous playing of anthems, screening of videos, and the repetitive imposition of slogans effectively obstruct rational and critical thinking, erase individual autonomy, and eliminate the capacity for making independent decisions. Those forcibly held in these camps in East Turkistan are systematically subjected to pressure to transform into products of the Chinese state. This state of mental captivity initiates with constant surveillance, monitoring every action, including how individuals sit,

stand, or even use the restroom. It is reinforced through weakening their bodies under harsh conditions and diminishing their physical autonomy.

The ongoing control and indoctrination policies in the region serve to create a constant ideological and ethnic surveillance under a high-tech surveillance system controlled by XUAR authorities. This control system, which goes beyond the borders of East Turkistan to monitor individuals even after they have left the region through the internet and various surveillance networks, leads East Turkistani women who have escaped from detention camps to live in a state of panic, insecurity, and constant surveillance. The monitoring of the relatives of women who had to leave East Turkistan by the Chinese state and, at times, their punishment has placed a significant burden and moral guilt on those who left the region. This, along with potential dangers, prevents them from communicating with their relatives and friends who remain in East Turkistan. Testimonies from hundreds of East Turkistanis living

in various parts of the world have revealed that the Chinese government threatens and coerces the Uyghur Diaspora, including individuals

appointed by the state, to control them, force them to return to the region, and gather information about East Turkistanis living abroad.^{xii}

Religious and Cultural Assimilation

The Chinese government's propaganda to make East Turkistani women remove their headscarves, veils, and niqabs has been an ongoing state policy under the banner of "combating backwardness."^{xiii} What was previously indirectly intervened through propaganda and encouragement in the attire of Muslim women in East Turkistan has become a directly intervened area in the past decade. Since August 2014, wearing a veil for Muslim women in East Turkistan, as well as using public buses with various forms of covering, has been banned.^{xiv} During this period, Islamic attire began to be directly associated with terrorism and extremism. The underlying factor behind this increased pressure is the new political stance framed by the Chinese government in line with the Global War on Terror campaign that gained momentum worldwide after September 11th.^{xv} This new framework has led to the radicalization

of steps taken by China throughout history to assimilate the Muslim Turkic communities living in East Turkistan. Various forms of attire such as burkas, niqabs, and veils, previously labeled as indicators of "backwardness," are now presented as symbols of terrorism and extremism by the CCP administration.

It is known that the Chinese state has long focused on transforming headscarf-wearing women in East Turkistan and aimed to achieve religious assimilation through various social policies adopted over the years. Within this framework, various media tools and state organs produced narratives of "modernization" and "integration," encouraging East Turkistani women to remove their headscarves, which symbolize their religious beliefs. In 2011, as a multimedia initiative by the Chinese state, the "Beauty Project" included many programs that "encouraged" East Turkistani women to change

their religious and national attire and adapt to current fashion trends.^{xvi}

Public fashion shows are organized by the state in the region, promoting social incentives for Muslim East Turkistani women to become “women who live in accordance with modern culture.” Clothing style and fashion sense are presented to women as indicators of “modernization” and being “compliant.” Women in East Turkistan are encouraged to experience a “transformation” comparing before and after this program,^{xvii} which emphasizes the state’s

attempt to suppress and control even their freedoms and subjective preferences in attire and lifestyle for religious assimilation purposes. As part of the project, East Turkistani women are also directed toward pursuing careers in cosmetology. This aims to distance them from their religious practices, make them conform to beauty standards, and transform them into “modern” women who do not wear traditional coverings. The goal is to shape East Turkistani women according to the CCP government’s ideals, effectively assimilating them into a single type of ideal Chinese citizen.^{xviii}

Forced Marriages and “Ethnic Integration”

One of the most significant impacts of the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) changing policies in East Turkistan after 2014 on women and girls is the interethnic marriages forced and coerced by the state.^{xix} While the Chinese government claims that interethnic marriages promote ethnic unity and social stability, data shows that these marriages are a product of the systematic population policy implemented by the Chinese government to assimilate Uy-

ghurs.^{xx} This policy also reveals the gender-based aspect of human rights violations in East Turkistan.

Under a large-scale social policy called the “Family Pair Up Policy,” Han Chinese individuals selected by the Chinese government are married to Muslim women from East Turkistan. East Turkistani women are pushed into these marriages either through threats or financial incentives to their families or themselves.

This program is pregnant with consequences such as assimilating the East Turkistan population, weakening national and religious culture, and imposing a Chinese identity. Forced marriages resulting from this policy are likely to lead to outcomes such as the disruption of cultural integrity, the weakening of national identity, and language and cultural loss among generations within East Turkistani society.

During the era termed as the “New Era” by Xi Jinping, the Chinese state organized forums and emphasized the need to increase interethnic marriages in many regions with ethnic diversity. These policies presented as efforts to increase interethnic “interaction, exchange, and

integration” aim to assimilate East Turkistanis by disconnecting them from their communities and cultural ties. While this policy is framed as an effort to increase integration and unity, a holistic view of the CCP government’s New Era policies reveals that it is a part of the assimilation and Sinicization project. Although the Chinese government claims to reduce interethnic tensions and promote harmony by increasing contact, in reality, this policy creates a single-voiced society within the narrative of “a united Chinese people,” leaving no room for ethnic, cultural, or religious differences. Under this policy, the Chinese government offers economic and social incentives for interethnic marriages.^{xxi}

Chinese Officials Assigned to East Turkistani Local Homes

According to Human Rights Watch, the “Family Pair Up” policy led to compulsory visits by 100,000 Chinese officials in 2016. As of December 2017, this number had surged to over a million officials.^{xxii} Initially conducted at two-month intervals, these visits evolved into mandatory stays of one week or more inside people’s homes. There is no evidence of

any right to protest this increasingly intrusive policy for Uighurs. Pictures shared on social media during these mandatory visits and subsequently reported indicate that Chinese officials have been infringing on privacy in various ways, involving themselves forcibly in domestic activities. Uighur families, especially women with spouses in internment camps,

were compelled to share meals and beds with these Chinese “relatives.” They were also required to raise and feed their children under their supervision. This intrusion by Chinese “relatives” not only violated the right to privacy but also compromised the confidentiality of their personal lives by sharing these photos without consent further infringing.

The implementation of the “Family Pair Up” policy, aligned with the policy’s objectives, encroached upon the safety and privacy of Uighur

families, women, and children. This policy, which has pervaded every aspect of life, irrespective of social, political, or economic factors, serves as a striking manifestation of China’s assimilation and Sinicization efforts. It specifically targets women with spouses detained in camps. Uighur women who faced the possibility of living with Chinese officials for monitoring purposes sometimes resorted to divorce to avoid this situation. In other cases, they were coerced into marrying Chinese officials to prevent such monitoring.

Forced Labor

Uyghur women, especially young girls, in East Turkistan are being forcibly subjected to slave labor by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) government. The CCP regime is utilizing women imprisoned within its surveillance and internment camp system as a workforce, and young girls in the region are being exploited as a source of cheap labor through coercion. Investigations conducted in 2023 revealed hidden agreements to force Uyghur high school girls to work as laborers in factories. One incident reported by four anonymous sources, including a village leader and a factory securi-

ty chief, exposed that approximately 90 Uyghur high school girls were locked into a textile factory operated by China, where they were forced to work 14 hours a day, seven days a week. The working conditions were inhumane, and it was reported that these young Uyghur girls frequently experienced physical and verbal abuse. Local authorities were tasked with pressuring Uyghur families to send their children to work in factories.^{xxiii}

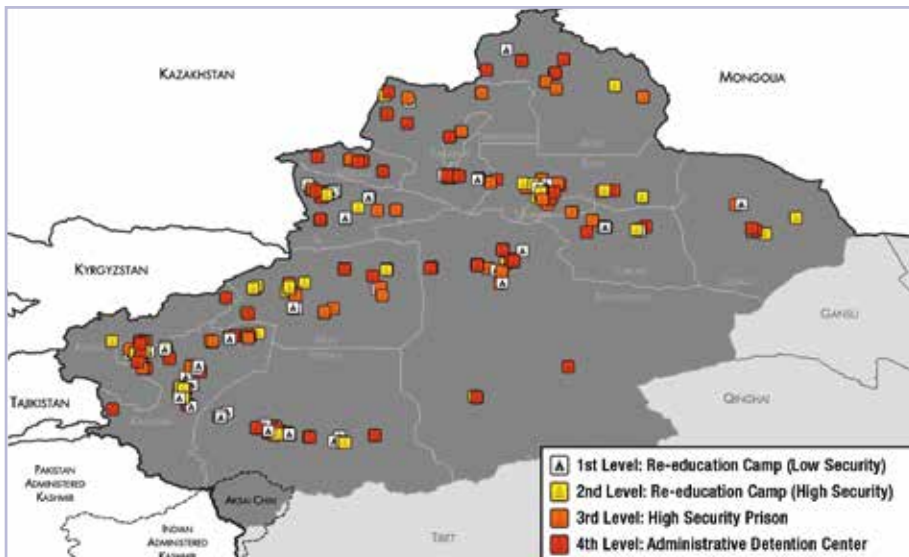
In the Xinjiang region of China, particularly in Hotan, Uyghur women and children are compelled to en-

engage in arduous labor to compensate for the lost earnings of their imprisoned male family members. According to an official working at the Manglay police station in Karakax County, local authorities sent many women and children to Aksu city to engage in labor-intensive tasks due to the absence of male labor within households. The official, speaking anonymously, mentioned that many families with young children were struggling financially as their male labor had been lost over the last six months due to detention in reeducation camps. To resolve this issue, the county government ensured that women and children came to Aksu city for cotton picking and other demanding jobs. Around 280 individuals from their own county alone were sent to work in these jobs, and the work was supervised by inspectors appointed by Karakax county authorities. Refusal to participate could result in being sent back to reeducation camps. According to the

official, this labor, which includes cotton picking and various other responsibilities, is implemented more for the families' own interests rather than being a part of the reeducation initiative.^{xxiv} Nevertheless, the policy of forced labor makes it difficult to argue that it benefits Uyghur women and families, given the harsh working conditions and the violation of their basic freedoms, human rights, and dignity.

Uyghur girls who are forcibly subjected to slave labor in factories are also prevented from leaving the factory premises after work. They are watched and disciplined by "teachers" appointed by village and factory authorities. If orders are not followed, physical violence with sticks is reported as a form of punishment. These young Uyghur women work under constant fear and in brutal conditions, with their fundamental freedoms, human rights, and personal dignity being severely violated.

Witnessing the Camps: Women in East Turkistan



It is well-documented that over three million East Turkistanis have been held in internment camps in East Turkistan since 2017, with millions still believed to be detained. It is estimated that a quarter of those forcibly held in these camps are women. Reports released due to the efforts of many East Turkistani women attempting to publicize the atrocities they have endured in these internment camps reveal various common crimes, including arbitrary detention, starvation, sexual harassment, torture, forced medical procedures, political indoctrination, and assimilation. Different means are systematically employed to control women. The human rights violations suffered by East Turkistani women and girls vary, with a distinct focus on sexual

violence. The testimonies of many women who have escaped the camps have shed light on the fact that the Chinese government has been implementing various forms of sexual crimes, including sexual humiliation, tor-

ture, forced abortions, harassment, and rape.

Women detained in the camps have been reported to be arbitrarily detained without legitimate charges or explanations, simply being told that they need to “meet with the police.”^{xxv} It has been noted that those detained in the camps have no chance of being released unless camp authorities believe they have been “transformed and re-educated,” and the criteria for this decision remain unknown.^{xxvi} Furthermore, there is no right to have a lawyer present during arrest or detention, nor is there any opportunity to appeal the decision. Interviews conducted by Amnesty International with over 100 East Turkistan indi-

viduals who have been detained or had family members detained in the camps have revealed that torture is a widespread issue within the camps.^{xxvii} The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has also expressed concerns in its report, concluding that there is sufficient evidence of extensive human rights violations, including torture and forced medical interventions, in the camps.^{xxviii}

According to testimonies from camp witnesses, the physical conditions in these camps are so dire that they do not allow a person to live in a healthy manner. It has been reported that the food in these camps is so poor that it can make people ill, that detainees are forced to use an open area in their rooms as toilets, that they have to share sleeping spaces meant for one person with 2-3 others, and sometimes they are not even allowed to sleep.^{xxix} Witnesses have revealed that in the camps, especially individuals who have been to Hajj, traveled abroad, or have many children, as well as women who wear headscarves, are detained. This illustrates how China's state deems certain religious and social practices and rituals as undesirable and how they are used to profile East Turkistan citizens. Tursunay, one of the camp witnesses, stated that during her time in the camp, detain-

ees were constantly told that they would go to prison for praying and fasting. Witnesses have shared that individuals who posed as mosque imams in the camps would preach to East Turkistanis, telling them not to believe in God, not to cover their heads, and that only Xi Jinping and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) could save them. It was also reported that individuals' minds were constantly subjected to transformation through chants, slogans, and other methods. Women who resisted the repression, harassment, and violence in the camps were threatened with physical harm by the police. Witnesses have described the "black room" practice, where East Turkistani women were taken to a dark room away from the eyes of other detainees, and subjected to various acts of sexual violence, including torture, harassment, and rape.

Gülzire Oğulhan, one of the East Turkistani women detained in the re-education camps, was arrested in 2017 by a Chinese police officer who claimed that she needed to receive 15 days of lessons for her "re-education." Contrary to what was told to her, Oğulhan was detained for 437 days in various "re-education centers" and factories. During her detention, she was subjected to electric shocks for spending more than two minutes in the toilet, her hands

were handcuffed for allowing another woman to perform ablution, and she was forced to make winter gloves for one penny each.^{xxx} While the Chinese government claims that the “re-education” process lasts for two weeks, the testimonies of hundreds of East Turkistanis who have been detained for months and years in various camps and centers, enduring horrific conditions and indoctrination, as well as physical and psychological violence, have been reported in the media and continue to be exposed.

In these camps, many East Turkistanis, like Tursunay, were given medications without any explanation, subjected to injections, and these practices were conducted without providing any medical rationale or explanation. These individuals were systematically weakened both physically and psychologically, and they had to contend with various illnesses due to the harsh conditions and forced medical interventions. They were treated as medical subjects. Camp authorities did everything in their power to make them lose their sense of self under brutal conditions and propaganda. Constantly deprived of food, sleep, and turned into medical guinea pigs, women were subjected not only to mistreatment and pressure mechanisms but also to sexual crimes.

It is evident that the Chinese state instrumentalizes repression and violence, taking into account gender factors. Gender-based discrimination, coupled with sexual violence, rape, forced sterilization, and mandatory birth control measures, has shown that all forms of violence against East Turkistani women are part of the so-called education process. The violence, repression, and propaganda imposed on women in the camps have caused many of them to lose their sanity, fall ill, lose consciousness, and faint. Women subjected to this treatment for an extended period have been virtually left to die, and many of these women eventually succumbed to the unbearable conditions. Tursunay Ziyavudun, one of the camp witnesses, has recounted how many women became unable to think of anything other than coping with pain and feeding themselves.

The practice known as the “Black Room,” as reported through the testimonies of Tursunay and many other women, is one of the most cruel aspects of the internment camps. Tursunay has stated that every night, Chinese officials sexually assaulted women in this Black Room. It is estimated that thousands of women were taken here without any explanation and subjected to various forms of sexual violence. Be-

cause these events occurred behind closed doors, the extent of the torture and cruelty is unknown. However, the mass rape, degrading, and injurious sexual crimes inflicted on Tursunay in this room serve as an example of the absence of any boundaries when it comes to torture in this room. This situation demonstrates that the Chinese state uses sexual crimes and gender-based violence to control East Turkistani women and transform them into obedient bodies.



Mihrigul Tursun, a Uighur woman, was detained in internment camps three times between 2015 and 2018. To gain a better understanding of the experiences of Uighur women in the internment camps, we present her account of what she went through in her own words:

“On April 16, 2017, a police officer summoned me to ‘talk’ again. He said he would ask a few questions and took me to the Cherchen Public Security Bureau. They held me in a house there for three days and nights without allowing me to sleep, constantly interrogating me. They asked me why I had learned Arabic, why I hadn’t stayed in China, why I had gone abroad, whom I knew among the Uighurs, and whom I knew among the Han Chinese. I told them I hadn’t done anything wrong against China, that I had only gone abroad to pursue a bachelor’s degree, and that I intended to return to my homeland to work after graduating. They asked me why I wore a headscarf. I explained that it was a common cultural practice in Egypt, that I didn’t wear it when I returned to my homeland, and that I wore it because I was a Muslim. The police officers beat me severely; when I couldn’t bear the pain and fainted, they would splash water on my face and continue to beat me. They said terrible things to me. They told me that my mother and children were dead, and my father was imprisoned. It turns out they were

lying. Then the police officers shaved my head and took me to the 'dark room.' They passed a metal electrical device with wires over my head and delivered electric shocks throughout my body from there. I thought they were going to kill me. I could hear the sound of the electric current passing through my head when they turned it on. My body was in a terribly strange condition. I felt the electricity everywhere, from my veins to my bones. When I was tortured with electric shocks like this, I thought that death would be better than experiencing these things. I couldn't bear the pain and said, 'Please kill me.' The police officers responded, 'It's not that easy to die. You will tell us what you did in Egypt!' I said, 'In Egypt, I only received an education. I didn't do anything else. I didn't even know how many Uighurs were there.' The police officers administered electric shocks again. I cried out 'Oh Allah!' in pain. They immediately stopped the electric shocks and said to me, 'Did you say Allah? Where is your Allah? Tell Him to come. If He is more powerful than me, He should save you from my hands. Where is He? If He can protect you, why are you

here? Tell Him to come and save you.' Then I lost consciousness due to the pain."^{XXXI}



Gülbahar Jalilova is one of the Doğu Türkistan women who were held in detention camps for over a year. We are sharing her and the experiences of other women in her ward in her own words.

"On May 22nd, the police took me to the police station. They took my phone and inspected it from 8:00 in the morning until 14:30 in the afternoon. When they found no problems with my phone, they took me to the basement and interrogated me. The first question was, 'You have been to Turkey, who did you meet there?' I replied, 'I am a Kazakh citizen, I haven't been

to Turkey.' Then they placed a Chinese document in front of me and asked me to sign it. I refused to sign, so they took me to No.3 Prison at 23:30. When they took me there, there were both men and women. They made me undress in front of them and gave me a yellow shirt and sports pants. They thoroughly checked me, took my urine and blood, and even conducted a pregnancy test. Later, I learned that they forced pregnant women to miscarry before sending them to the prison. They took photos of my face from all angles. I was taken to Ward 704. They opened the door and pushed me into the room.

There was a very dim light in the room that was always on. There were 40 women in the room where I stayed. Twenty women were standing like needles. At that time, they had not shaved the women's heads yet. Their hair had grown, and they looked terrible. More than half of the women in the room had their hands chained to their feet by shackles. I had no idea where I had been brought. I thought, 'Is this a room where insane people stay?' I screamed and shouted. One woman in the ward told me, 'Don't cry, if you cry, you will face severe punishments.'"

I stayed in a room with no windows. In the picture I have, there might be around 15 people sitting in the room, but there were 40 of us in there. The toilet was in the same room. We all had to sit facing the toilet, and when women used it, everything was visible. We had no choice. We were staying in very unhealthy conditions. I lost 20 kilograms there. In the camp, they didn't provide anything for women to use during their menstruation. We slept on empty stomachs. Our bodies were covered in sores. Our hair was infested with lice, so they shaved our heads. Every ten days, the police would come. They would strip us naked, and three male police officers would stand by the door with their guns. The door would open, and then ten female police officers would enter. They would make us put our hands on our heads and sit down. They would check if we wrote something or hid something. They made us sit down and stand up three times completely naked. Women who had just given birth were brought from the hospital to the prison on the day they gave birth, while their children stayed in the hospital. The women's breasts were producing milk, but they couldn't give it to

their children. Since the children were in the hospital, the mothers didn't know the condition of their babies.

Every day, we had to express gratitude to the Chinese Communist Party. They would make us sing the party's songs. If we didn't sing those songs in the morning, they wouldn't even give us the simplest meals. We had to sing the same songs at noon and in the evening. Once a week, we were made to look at Xi Jinping's picture for 20 minutes. We were forced to write "confession" letters, expressing our gratitude to the party, promising that we would lead better lives, provide Chinese education

to our children, acknowledge China's top status in the world, and pledge not to send our children to Uighur schools. Once a week, they would come and give us two pills. We couldn't ask what the pills were for or why they were giving them to us. We would take the pills through a small window in the door and wait until they left. Every ten days, they would inject us and draw blood from our arms. We didn't know what they were injecting into our bodies. Later, we learned that these drugs were used to stop the women in the camp from menstruating and make them numb to pain and hunger."

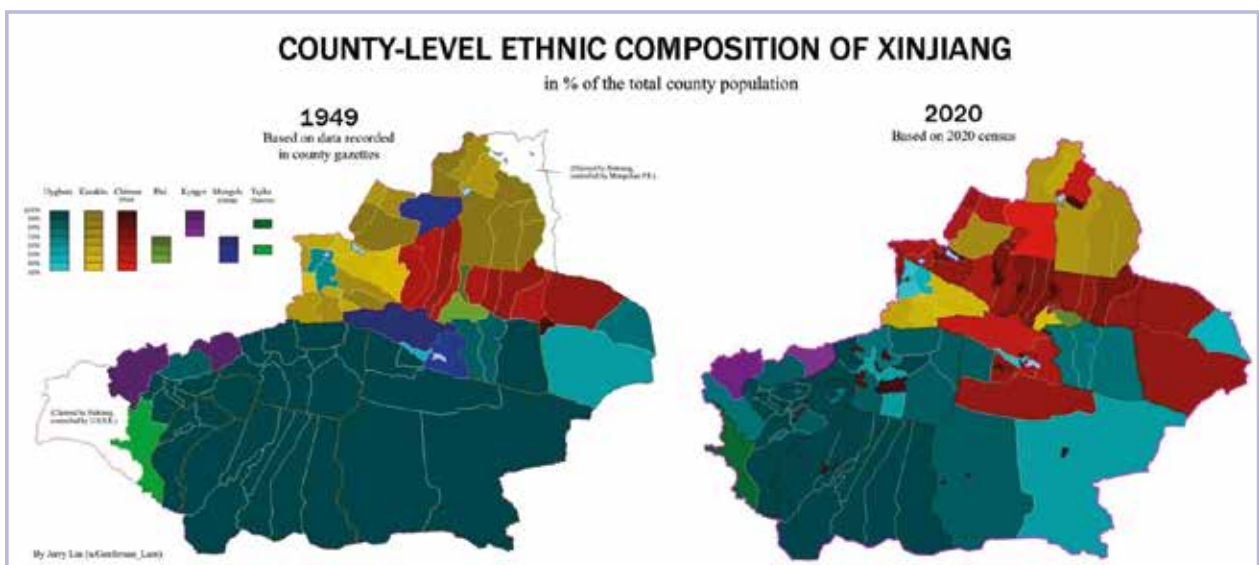
Population Policies Implemented Through the Bodies of East Turkistani Women

The Chinese state has implemented various population transfer, social engineering, and settlement policies in the territories it controls, with a focus on Sinicizing the population. According to data released by the Chinese government, the Han Chinese demographic in East Turkistan increased from 245,000 to 445,000

between 2010 and 2020, doubling in size. Research on the ethnic distribution of the population in East Turkistan from the 1950s to 2020 reveals a systematic increase in the Han Chinese population ratio and a decrease in the Uighur population ratio.^{xxxii}

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) demonstrates its control and repression most rigorously in the fields of population engineering and family planning, shaping many of its social policies towards the demographic and societal transformation it aims to achieve. One of the family planning policies that the Chinese state has put forward in accordance with its own population projection is the encouragement of late marriage, late pregnancy, and the compulsory one-child policy in every family. While this policy has been implemented as a population planning strategy across China, it has gradually relaxed over time. However, in East Turkistan, it is still enforced more strictly. This planning, which has been an important national policy of China since 1982, has resulted in a slowdown in the growth of the young population over time, leading to an aging Chinese population. As a result, China began to make changes to this policy in 2018, remov-

ing the one-child restrictions and encouraging Han Chinese to have more children. However, this change was not implemented in the same way in East Turkistan. In the same years, the one-child policy in East Turkistan was still strictly enforced, and serious penalties were imposed for violating this policy. According to many witnesses from East Turkistan, the Chinese state has considered having more than one child as a reason to be sent to internment camps. While the one-child policy has been relaxed and altered nationwide in China, the stricter control and punishment of the right to have children in East Turkistan serve as evidence that the Chinese state has established a special mechanism of repression against the Uighurs, aiming not just at demographic planning but also at exerting dominance over the bodies of Uighur women in an attempt to diminish the Uighur population.



Research conducted by the investigator Adrian Zenz in 2019 revealed that as part of China's planned birth control policies in East Turkistan, forced sterilization and intrauterine device (IUD) applications were intended to be imposed on 80% of the Uighur female population. It is predicted that these measures would reduce the region's population by one-third over a span of 20 years. The Chinese government is implementing these compulsory birth control policies under the guise of population planning, but it constitutes a form of demographic genocide.^{xxxiii} The Chinese government's mass detentions of over three million Uighurs in the region, coupled with the strict enforcement of birth control policies, demonstrate that these policies specifically target the Uighur population, amounting to ethnic and racially discriminatory practices. Official Chinese statistics show a 48% decrease in birth rates in East Turkistan from 2017 to 2019. Despite China's claims of not imposing oppressive birth control policies

and allowing up to three children, leaked official documents have revealed that many Uighur women were detained and punished for having more than one child.^{xxxiv} Adrian Zenz's report, based on data, testimonies, and state documents obtained from the region, exposes that Uighur women are subjected to forced sterilizations and birth quotas, even though these practices are not presented as official policies.^{xxxv} The Chinese state argues that the declining birth rates in East Turkistan are related to increased income and the development of family planning. However, according to numerous independent sources, having many children is considered one of the main reasons for being detained, sent to internment camps, or monitored by the Chinese government.^{xxxvi} As a result, Uighur women are subjected to regular pregnancy checks by the state. It is evident that the dramatic population decline in East Turkistan, orchestrated by the state, constitutes a form of demographic genocide.

Children Separated from East Turkistani Mothers

Since 1986, China's Family Planning Policy, also known as the One-Child Policy, has not only deprived Uighur women in East Turkistan of their right to have children but has also violated their parental rights by separating Uighur mothers from their children through forced labor and internment camp practices.^{xxxvii} Hundreds of Uighur children have "disappeared," systematically separated from their families and mothers and placed in state-run institutions as part of the Family Planning Policy. This policy results in Uighur children growing up without any family bonds, completely isolated from their parents and ignorant of their rights to grow up in a nurturing environment. One of the most devastating consequences of the persecution policies imposed by the Chinese government in East Turkistan is the forced separation of children from their parents, who are detained in internment camps, and placing these children under state custody in orphanages. Sending children whose parents are detained in camps to state-run boarding schools paves the way for a new generation of Uighurs to grow up disconnected from their own language, beliefs, and culture, com-

pletely indoctrinated by the Chinese state. These children grow up without their parents, without knowing their own culture, and without understanding their identity, ultimately being assimilated into Chinese culture. This situation is a clear violation of the rights of children and respect for family life.

Gulbahar Jalilova, a witness to an internment camp, stated that a woman she shared a cell with was taken directly to the camp after giving birth, but her child was taken away and left at the hospital.^{xxxviii} This separation during a critical period in a baby's development, where the mother's presence is of paramount importance for psychological and physical well-being, is detrimental to the child's healthy growth.

Similarly, as part of the Family Planning Policy, the Population Planning Office team reportedly confiscates newborn babies from Uighur families when they exceed the designated number of children. These actions are clear violations of human rights and the principles of family life.^{xxxix}

The Uighur children who are separated from their families and placed

in state-run orphanages as part of China's policies are growing up as orphans, devoid of a real family environment, in the midst of the Chinese state's genocidal practices. They are raised without experiencing the sense of belonging to their religious and national community, away from their parents. The Uighur children forced to grow up in state-designated orphanages have their ethnic and religious identities erased and are raised to adhere to the Chinese state and its ideology. Social engineering efforts carried out in line

with family planning and population control policies focus on grooming generations of young Uighurs who obediently follow the Chinese state.

Orphanages and boarding schools that violate the Convention on the Rights of the Child and various parental rights subject children and families to discriminatory treatment against their beliefs and identities. Especially for Uighur children who are forcibly separated from their families, these institutions can cause irreversible psychological damage.^{XL}

What Should Be Done?

In light of concrete evidence and thousands of testimonies that have proven human rights abuses and inhumane practices, the Chinese government must remember its commitments to safeguarding fundamental freedoms and human rights. To prevent ongoing human rights abuses and hold those responsible for crimes against humanity accountable, the international community must take a unified stance and call on the Chinese government to account for its actions. Organizations and institutions that uphold human rights as a core value, such as the United Nations and others, should

collectively take a strong stance against the ongoing genocide in East Turkistan.

China, which seeks to hide the experiences of the Uighur population by suppressing communication and freedom of expression through repression, censorship, and blackout tactics, should open its doors to impartial human rights monitoring organizations and provide full transparency about what is happening in the region.

A special women's solidarity network should be established to counter the Chinese government, which de-

nies the subjectivity and existence of Uighur women, and restricts their potential to be free individuals by imposing its policies. Women's organizations worldwide should unite as a single voice against this oppression. To achieve this, the following actions should be taken:

- The oppression faced by Uighur women in East Turkistan should be brought to the forefront of the international agenda.
- All women's organizations should unite against the policies imposed by the Chinese government on Uighur women's bodies, and demand accountability from the Chinese government.
- The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) should collaborate with civil society members to take a joint stance against the oppressive policies of the Chinese government on Uighur women.
- Sanctions should be imposed on the Chinese government to encourage improvements in women's rights.
- Measures should be taken to expose human rights violations such as forced labor, forced sterilization, forced interethnic marriages, rape, sexual violence, discrimination, and repression, and to protect Uighur women.
- Uighur children forcibly separated from their mothers and placed in state-designated orphanages and boarding schools should be reunited with their mothers. An international joint effort should be initiated to create a database where mothers who were forced to leave their land due to oppression and persecution can find their children. Human rights-oriented countries and civil society organizations should work together to demand that the Chinese government reunite fragmented families.

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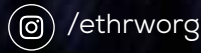
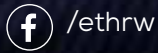
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