

CONCENTRATION CAMPS IN CHINA

In Xinjiang hundreds of thousands of Muslims are being locked up in so called 're-education schools' which are actually camps for Muslims. These Muslims are Uighurs, they are a Turkic speaking minority ethnic group who live mostly in Xinjiang. Uighurs are commonly discriminated against in China for example they are now subject to ethnic profiling at vehicle and pedestrian checkpoints whereas everyone else is free to go.

Bans made on Islamic things

Harsh new legal penalties have been introduced to curtail Islamic identity and practice - banning, among other things, long beards and headscarves, the religious instruction of children, and even Islamic-sounding names. In April 2017, China's communist party prohibited 29 Muslim names in the erstwhile East Turkestan now called Xinjiang. China defends the measure as part of its efforts to curb terrorism and extremism on the mainland. In March 2017, the Chinese Communist Party, led by political zealot Chen Quanguo, set out new rules for so-called abnormal beards and full-body veils. Police in public spaces like bus stands, railway stations and airports were directed to ensure people who covered faces and had long, flowing beards were not permitted entry. Police went door-to-door, forcing Muslims to Sinicize the mosques. The domes on mosques and minarets, the hallmarks of Islamic architecture, are removed and replaced with flatter roofs typifying Chinese architecture.



The camps

These are some accounts of people's experiences related to these camps taken from the BBC:

Reyila Abulaiti

In 2002, Reyila Abulaiti travelled from Xinjiang to the UK to study. She met and married a British man, took British citizenship and started a family. Last year, her mother came for her usual summer visit, spending time with her daughter and grandson and doing a bit of London sightseeing. Xiamuxinuer Pida, 66, is a well-educated former-engineer with a long service record at a Chinese state company. She flew back to Xinjiang on 2 June. Having not heard from her, Reyila called to check she'd got home OK. The conversation was brief and terrifying. "She told me that the police were searching the house," Reyila remembers. It was Reyila who appeared to be the target of the investigation. She needed to send copies of her documents, her mother said - proof of UK address, a copy of her British passport, her UK telephone numbers and information about her university course. And then, after asking her to send them via a Chinese mobile chat service, Xiamuxinuer said something that sent a chill down Reyila's spine. "Don't call me again," her mother told her. "Don't call me ever." It was the last time her daughter would hear her voice. She believes she has been in a camp ever since. "My mum has been detained for no reason," she says. "As far as I know, the Chinese government wants to delete Uighur identity from the world."

Ablet Tursun Tohti

Each morning, when 29-year-old Ablet Tursun Tohti was woken an hour before sunrise, he and his fellow detainees had one minute to get to the exercise yard. After lining up, they were made to run. "There was a special room to punish those who didn't run fast enough," Ablet says. "There were two men there, one to beat with a belt, the other just to kick." "We sang the song called 'Without the Communist Party There Can Be No New China,'" Ablet says. "And they taught us laws. If you couldn't recite them in the correct way, you'd be beaten." He was there for a month in late 2015 and, in some ways, he is one of the lucky ones. In the early days of the internment camps, the lengths of the re-education "courses" appear to have been shorter. Over the past two years there are very few reports of anyone being released at all. And since there has now been a mass recall of passports, Ablet was one of the last Uighurs able to leave China. He has sought refuge in Turkey, a country with a sizeable Uighur diaspora because of strong cultural and linguistic links. Ablet tells me that his 74-year-old father and eight of his siblings are in the camps.

Abdusalam Muhemet

He was detained by the police in Xinjiang in 2014 for reciting an Islamic verse at a funeral. They eventually decided not to charge him, he says, but he still wasn't free. "They told me I needed to be educated," he explains. The facility he found himself in did not look like a school. The rolls of razor wire can be identified from the shadows they cast under the harsh desert sun. He describes the same routine of exercise, bullying and brainwashing

"Ali"

Twenty-five-year-old Ali, not his real name, is one of those too scared to talk openly. In 2015 he says he ended up in a camp after the police found a picture of woman wearing a niqab, a face veil, on his mobile phone. "One old lady was there for having made a pilgrimage to Mecca," he tells me, "and an old man for not paying his water bill on time." Ali (not his real name) is unwilling to be identified During one of the forced exercise sessions an official's car entered the camp and the gate was briefly left open. "Suddenly, a small child ran in towards his mother who was running with us. "She went towards her child, embraced him and started crying. "Then a policeman grabbed the woman by her hair and dragged the small child out of the camp."

Facilities

A satellite picture was taken in 2015 of a desert in the west of China however a picture taken in the same place in 2018 showed something different There is now a huge and highly secure compound in its place. A picture taken in October 2018 shows more development to the building. This is one of the camps being used to torture Muslims.

Dabancheng, July 2015



Dabancheng, April 2018





This image, taken by Sentinel Images in October 2018, shows how quickly the site has been developed

Torture in the camps

Survivors of these atrocious camps have claimed that they were tortured whilst in the camp. Evidence of this comes from a victim, she is called Ruqiye Perhat and she spent four years in the camp, she states that any woman or man under the age of 35 was 'raped and sexually abused' inside the camp. Also Ms Perhat, now 30, told the Washington Post that she was repeatedly raped by Han Chinese guards, resulting in two pregnancies which were both aborted while she was in prison. Other former prisoners described how younger women would be taken from their packed cells by guards in the night. Gulzira Auelkhan, 40, said the men would put 'bags on the heads of the ones they wanted' during the 18 months she spent in the camp. Kazakh and Chinese citizen Gulzira Mogdyn, 38, was imprisoned after WhatsApp was found on her phone in December 2017. At the time, she was 10 weeks pregnant, but Ms Mogdyn says officials told her she was not allowed to have the child, and removed it from her body without anaesthetic the next day.

Survivors have also said that children were taken from their Muslim parents to "schools" where they were taught that their Islamic faith is wrong and sometimes described as a disease.

Drone footage was also found where many people were blindfolded and bound being taken by police, most likely to the camps, however Chinese officials claim that this is normal practice.



The Un has also stated that they have credible evidence of 100,000 Muslims being locked up in these camps

What you can do

Spread awareness; Spread the word about what is happening as many people are not aware of this, this is one of the biggest violations of basic human rights and we need to act on it.

Sign petitions: There are many petitions to raise awareness and to help find a solution.

Unfortunately, even though the UN has intervened, this is still going on and we need to speak up about it before it gets worse, peaceful protests are a good idea not only to raise awareness but to show China that we will do everything in our power to stop this.