

The background of the cover features a large, dark blue chevron shape pointing downwards. To the left of this shape is a light gray, textured area. In the center of this light area, a small child in a white dress stands with arms outstretched. Their shadow is cast onto the ground below, and the shadow is shaped like the flag of the Uyghuristan Islamic Movement, which consists of a green field with a white cross and four white crescents.

The Human Rights Report on China Uyghur Autonomous Region





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Hüseyin Raşit Yılmaz
İlderya Avşar
Mehmet Yeğın
Rabigöl Hacımuhammed

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1. Executive Summary

In-person and online interviews we have conducted with 53 persons, some of whom are directly victims of concentration camps, from February to June 2021 is the focal point of the Human Rights Report on China Uyghur Autonomous Region. Witnesses interviewed reside in 12 countries (USA, Germany, Australia, Bahrain, Denmark, Finland, France, the Netherlands, UK, Kazakhstan, Norway, Turkey). 42 of interviewees are Uyghur and 19 of them are women, 6 of them are direct camp victims and 40 of them are relatives of victims. Over 70 hours of shooting was done during interviews with the consent of interviewees.

After touching upon what China has been doing and aiming in the region in the introduction of the report, securitization by China of Uyghur Autonomous Region is considered with a near past examination that extends to 9/11 attacks. It is considered how Chinese Communist Party manipulates the global terror concern in order to eradicate religious and ethnic differences and how this led to irreparable damages to ethnic and religious minorities, the Uyghur in particular. Rapid regression in fundamental rights and freedoms in the post-2009 era and elimination of human rights such as education in Uyghur Turkish and freedom of belief are included in the report along with testimonies of witnesses.

The report examines concentration camps in details which surfaced, for the first time, in years from 2014 to 2016 and became widespread with massive detentions after 2016 with real-life experiences of victims isolated in the said camps and their relatives. Physical conditions within concentration camps that are harsh to an extent unprecedented since WWII, examples of torture and sexual abuse are included in the report along with statements of witnesses. A separate section was dedicated within the report to those camps where children “seized” by the Chinese government for their parents are in concentration camps. Children kept in those camps, in total deprivation of their cultural heritage, are subjected to “Sinicization” program, with no contact with their close - distant family members.

Slave labor centers in Uyghur Region that are among important parts of global supply chain and how such centers are being run are discussed in details within the report. Exploitation of labor of slave workers without compensation and in a manner subject to social isolation was revealed with testimonies of victims’ relatives. Repressions orchestrated by Chinese state Uyghurs living outside borders of China and the other minorities are faced with, breakdown of their contact with their families or restricted communication under supervision of police and widespread threats they take for return to China are considered thoroughly under the heading “Uyghurs Living Outside China” within the report. Radical interventions by China on the Uyghur traditional family structure, massive sterilization policy that has victimized Uyghur, Kazakh, Uzbek, Kyrgyz women of all ages and role of the Uyghur Autonomous Region in the international organ trafficking are presented to the reader with witnesses’ statements.

It was deemed fit to address whether or not Chinese population is aware of what has been taking place in the Uyghur region under a separate heading. Because this issue was closely related to freedom of “information”, which is one of the fundamental rights which the authoritarian single-party regime of China deprived of its own citizens.

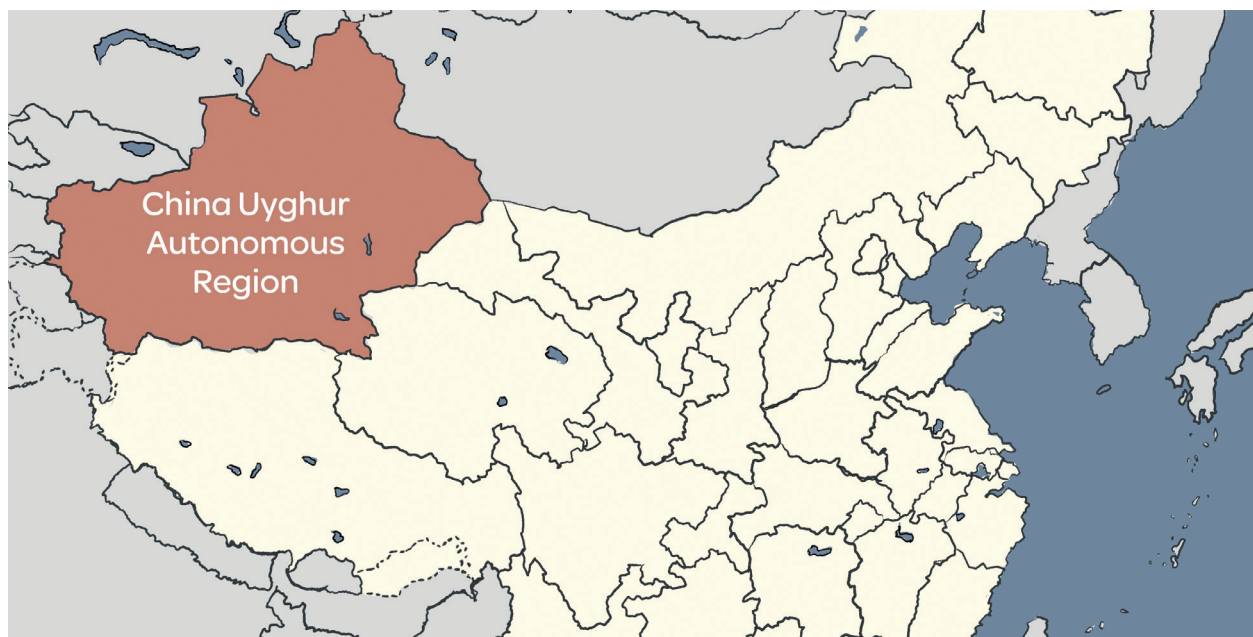
The final section of the report addressing camps within framework of international law is based on statements of 6 camp victims from among 53 persons interviewed during the study. Tortures described in detail within such statements and personal testimonies of victims are being examined on a legal ground in respect of “genocide” accusation that is included in the international law.

Uyghur Autonomous Region Human Rights Report has been prepared in 4 languages; i.e. Chinese, English, Turkish and Uyghur Turkish. You may access versions of the report in different languages and high resolution illustrations at uyghurreport.com.

2. What is China doing in Uyghur Autonomous Region?

In line with its objective of becoming one of the dominant actors of the international system, China is trying to position itself on matters concerning politics, economy and security in a global scale. For the security leg of such target, it has been trying to persuade international actors about its allegation that Uyghurs are a part of the “global terrorism problem. Especially after 9/11 Attacks, China effectively benefitted from political opportunity structure of the era of global fight on terrorism led by the USA. The Chinese State had, then, sowed seeds of policies pursued, today, in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region under the name of fight against terrorism and started justifying such policies in international platforms.

Jiang Zemin, who was held the office of Presidency in 2001, promised, during the press conference after 9/11 terrorist attacks, despite of all differences and conflicts between two countries, that they would give full support to the USA in fight against terrorism and play an active role in the UN Security Council to that end.¹ Only two months after attacks took place, an explanation released by China’s Permanent Mission to the UN clearly revealed what such fight meant. the document titled “Terrorist Activities Run by Eastern Turkistan Organizations, Their Links with Osama bin Laden and Taliban” pointed out that “Eastern Turkistan” organization has 40 different extensions active in different countries and the organization came under auspices of Osama bin Laden, leader of al-Qaida. In October 2000, it was also alleged that Bin Laden and Taliban donated \$300K to the organization until 2001 when September 11 attacks took place.² With this short explanation that lacked any document evidencing allegations and includes examples of some terrorist activities that took place in Uyghur Autonomous Region during 90s, all events of violence were completely linked to either Bin Laden or Taliban.



¹ Permanent Mission of the People’s Republic of China to the UN. (2001). Chinese President Jiang Zemin Expressed Condolences by Telegraph over Terrorist Attacks on America and Talked with President Bush on Telephone to Show China’s Position against Terrorism. Accessed on May 14, 2021.

² Permanent Mission of the People’s Republic of China to the UN. (2001). Terrorist Activities Perpetrated by ‘Eastern Turkistan’ Organizations and Their Links with Osama bin Laden and the Taliban. Accessed on May 14, 2021.

About one year after release of the document, UN Security Council was to accept that Eastern Turkistan Terrorist Organization as an organization linked with al-Qaida and Taliban.³ However, another explanation issued by the Chinese government prior to such decision had started giving signals on what was being planned to be done under the name of fight on terrorism. The letter titled “‘Eastern Turkistan’ Terrorist Powers Can Not Get Away with Impunity” alleged that Turkishness as an ethnic identity was a wrong and made-up term.⁴ According to such document, as Turkish khanates collapsed one after another by the end of 8th century, remaining Turks had disappeared by mingling with different ethnic groups. Turks cited in books after the 11th century only described Turkish-speaking peoples who never lived under the same management from a historical perspective. Similarly, “Easter Turkistan” does not refer to a geographical region and is being described as a political term derived by colonists wishing to divide China. The fact that China dedicated a significant part of such document prepared on terrorism concern to problematizing an identity abstract from both historical and cultural perspectives were precursors of securitization, Sinicization and cultural genocide practices of the future. As a matter of fact, oppressions and arrests had increased in Uyghur Autonomous Region, and, in parallel to this, police brutality, torture and capital punishments had become common. When the situation got severe, Mary Robinson, UN High Commissioner FOR Human Rights, visiting China had expressed her concern because of the “front” given by the campaign of fight on terrorism led by USA to China to increase pressure on Muslims and the other minority groups.⁵

The Chinese administration that had the wind of fight on terrorism, the dominant security discourse of 2000s, at its back continued to increase severity of oppression in Uyghur Autonomous Region and to justify this with the allegation of fight on terrorism. While describing events of violence that took place in Urumqi on July 5, 2009 as “Chinese version of September 11”,⁶ Chinese administration sentenced at least 25 persons involved in events to capital punishment and made around 40 persons disappear in a way that nobody ever heard from these people. The year 2011 was going to be the beginning of the Arab Spring that would lead to huge political fluctuations in the Middle East and Northern Africa, which reached Syria, igniting a civil war there, and a new political atmosphere of opportunities for the Chinese administration. The first action taken by the Chinese government which observed protests growing bigger and bigger and spreading to different countries was to increase control and censorship of Internet, tightening the control over social networking sites in particular and ensure that key words that can be used to get information about the Arab Spring such as “Jasmine” or “Egypt” are filtered during Internet searches. Also, the administration decided to set aside, for the public security expenditures, more money than the official defense budget, for the first time in decades.⁷

³ UN Security Council. (2009). Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement. Accessed on May 14, 2021.

⁴ Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the United States of America. (2002). ‘East Turkistan’ Terrorist Forces Cannot Get Away with Impunity. Accessed on May 15, 2021.

⁵ Elisabeth Rosenthal. (2001). U.N. Official Fears China Uses Terror War as Front for Abuses. The New York Times, November 10, 2001.

⁶ Wei Shan and Gang Chen. (2009). The Urumqi Riots and China’s Ethnic Policy in Xinjiang. East Asian Policy. (2009). 15.

⁷ Jing-dong Yuan. (2011). The Arab Spring and China’s Evolving Middle East Policy. World Politics Review. December 20, 2011

The real milestone for China was the time when ISIS became more and more powerful in Syria and Iraq and started to be named as a new global terror threat with the increase in number of its foreign fighters. During such period, the climax of the terror threat perception around the world was invasion by ISIS of the city of Mosul in 2014. For the first time, ISIS had intensely perpetrated activities in countries such as USA, Australia, Belgium, France and Canada the same year. Upon invasion of Mosul, Obama administration organized air strikes on ISIS in August of the same year. August of that year was also the time when news surfaced that 259 individuals from Kashgar, densely populated by Uyghurs densely were kept, for 10 days, in captivity at a place they do not know by Chinese administration for the purpose of re-education.⁸ In the same year, 5,000 individuals from Gulca district of Uyghur Autonomous Region were taken to another facility and were given forced education by categorizing them from A to D. Those from category A with the highest tendency of resisting against authority and the highest security risk received compulsory education for 20 days, those from category B where individuals who do not easily change their ideas were at received compulsory education for 15 days, those from category C where the undecided individuals were at received compulsory education for 7 days and those from category D where individuals not found to be dangerous were at received compulsory education for 4 days. The Chinese government had started trying concentration camps on Uyghurs.⁹

In 2015, while ISIS perpetrated subsequent terrorist activities in many parts of the world, the Chinese government was announcing terrorist activities that took place in its country many months earlier right after ISIS attacks that happened in different countries of the world and starting to show itself as the target of the global terrorism. For instance, it had announced a shootout that took place in a coal mine in China following subsequent ISIS attacks that hit Paris, two months after the actual event, as if two incidents had happened simultaneously, thereby, launching China as one of the global terrorism targets.¹⁰ As a matter of fact, following events that took place in Paris, Wang Yi, then-Chinese Ministry of foreign Affairs, delivered a speech and emphasized that China was, also, a victim of terrorism and what happens in Uyghur Autonomous Region must be accepted as part of the international terrorism and added, “China is, just like what happened in France, faced with a threat and must be prepared against such threat.”¹¹ Just like what Minister Wang expressed, China accelerated the process of building of camps and trial within scope of such plan it described as “mandatory.” Uyghurs kept in the camp for 15 days in Qapqal Xibe Autonomous County were educated on different topics ranging from marriage law to watching propaganda videos. Information provided also indicates that, during such education, 42 participants were in aforesaid category A.¹² While 3000 more people, of Hotan, were also subjected to compulsory education the same year, photos of camps whose walls had barbed wire appeared in media.¹³

⁸ Adrian Zenz. (2018). Thoroughly reforming them towards a healthy heart attitude’: China’s political re-education campaign in Xinjiang. Central Asian Survey. (2018). 1–27.

⁹ China Daily. (2015). Xinjiang’s Yining County establishes ‘de-extremification’ education. Accessed on May 16, 2021.

¹⁰ Marie Tredaniel and Pak K. Lee. (2017). Explaining the Chinese Framing of the ‘Terrorist’ Violence in Xinjiang: Insights from Securitization Theory. Nationalities Papers 46. no. 1 (2017): 13.

¹¹ Ben Blanchard and Michael Martina. (2015). “After Paris, China calls for world’s support in Xinjiang,” Reuters. November 15, 2015.

¹² Adrian Zenz. (2018). Thoroughly reforming them towards a healthy heart attitude’: China’s political re-education campaign in Xinjiang. Central Asian Survey. (2018). 12

¹³ Lopnur County Government. (2015). The autonomous prefecture performs a performance evaluation of my county’s ‘deextremification’ work. November 21, 2015.

While years 2014 and 2015 had passed by with global scale of ISIS threat and airstrikes organized by the USA and US-led coalition to ISIS, the world's agenda, once again, focused on global terrorism threat in the aftermath of September 11. Concentration camp trials put into practice in China had not attracted attention yet. Taking power from such situation, the Chinese administration, as part of the law on fight with terrorism that came into force in December, 2015, continued to address social, cultural and religious activities of Uyghurs as a security problem and accelerated construction of gigantic camps as of 2016.¹⁴ Certain beard styles, headscarf, halal restaurant and slaughter houses complying with religious rituals, medical support received by patients wearing headscarf and many other things were forbidden within scope of fight with ethnic discrimination, religious extremism and fight with terrorism which China called "three evil powers."

ISIS, from January to March of the same year, organized over 10 terrorist attacks in 9 different countries. Upon such developments, China, showing the growing terrorism threat as a reason, acquired the right of easily accessing data of Uyghurs through agreements signed with five large technology companies of the nation.

From 2016 to 2018, area occupied by concentration camps of China grew by 465 percent and reached 2,700,000 sqm.¹⁵ During such period, as a result of the fact that attention had been directed mainly to ISIS and the other terrorist organizations trying to grow up in Syria and leap to the other countries, what was going on in China continued to fail draw attention or continued to be described as "allegation" and was ignored. Such situation indicates that China has been quite successful in effectively manipulating the atmosphere of fighting with global terrorism since September 11, 2001. Satellite images released by Australian Strategic Policy Institute in 2018 unveiled the gigantic camps that were under construction in China and explanations made by the Uyghur Diaspora who could not hear from their relatives kept in camps through social media and international press had started getting attention.¹⁶ Interviews conducted by Human Rights Watch, the same year, with those who used to be at detention camps and their relatives created a tremendous impression,¹⁷ eyes started turning to this "bizarre" situation in China, a bit late though.

Observations by Journalist Mathias Bölinger of Deutsche Welle, who travelled to Uyghur Autonomous Region for 3 times from 2018 to 2020, reflects the extraordinary situation: "On the first day, I did not directly go to the hotel so that the police would not know that I registered myself at it. Because if they knew that I was coming with a journalist visa, they would not allow me to freely wander and I would not be able to see camps. This is how they treat each and every journalist. So, I directly headed to a camp campus to have a look around it, I turned on my camera and started shooting a video. Then, they noticed me through the camera and instantly came and detained me for interrogation. Actually, I took as many photos as I could before they came. They did not take me inside, they only interrogated me in the administrative

¹⁴ International Labour Organization (ILO). (2017). Counter-Terrorism Law of the People's Republic of China. March 30, 2017.

¹⁵ Fergus Ryan, Danielle Cave and Nathan Ruser. (2018). Mapping Xinjiang's 're-education' camps. Australian Strategic Policy Institute. Accessed on May 16, 2021.

¹⁶ Fergus Ryan, Danielle Cave and Nathan Ruser. (2018). Mapping Xinjiang's 're-education' camps. Australian Strategic Policy Institute. Accessed on May 16, 2021.

¹⁷ Human Rights Watch. (2018). 'Eradicating Ideological Viruses' China's Campaign of Repression Against Xinjiang's Muslims. September 2018.

section. Most of the guardians in that camp were Uyghur, yet their chiefs were Han Chinese. The camp had very high walls and fences I saw people waiting in the queue to see their relatives. That was back in 2018. It was built like a prison. There were watch towers and patrol cars inside. Walls had writings in big font on them, such as: “Be loyal to your Party. Do not stop obeying your party. Ethnic Unity and Solidarity. The only path to success is knowing the national language.” They were randomly stopping people, asking for their IDs, in the streets of Aksu city while they were walking and there were checkpoints at every corner. All people waiting in the line to be checked were Uyghurs. I did not see any Han Chinese. Police officers who accompanied me asked me to delete photos I shot whilst walking. Even at the city center, neighborhood police stations built with intervals of 100 to 200 meters were constantly checking identities. By the way, there were barbed wires around the city and one could enter the city after going through a control at checkpoints. What I saw there was actually how securitization influenced the daily life to a great extent... When, for a brief moment, I was not accompanied by police officers, I stopped at traffic lights to get across the street. And when the light turned green, I did not get across the street for I had decided to wait for a taxi and I did not get across the street. Then, two police officers came to me right away and asked me why I was waiting and what I was doing there.”¹⁸

In 2019, when the secret 400-page document prepared by the Chinese government on camps was leaked and published in The New York Times, some important information was obtained about purpose of camps and how they are run.¹⁹ While the said document referred to people kept in camps against their will as patients whose minds contracted virus, it was emphasized that no mercy would be shown for those required to be treated due to such virus. In the days that followed, official documents regarding the camp policy of China continued to be leaked, many countries reacted to China. The Chinese administration that first remained silent against reactions, then denied camp allegations, then, claimed that camps were education centers opened for vocational training of Uyghurs warned many countries, USA in particular, not to interfere with its internal affairs.²⁰ However, such reaction could not prevent the China’s inhumane treatment of detainees at camps from coming to light and being called the most systematic human rights violation of the 21st century.

In this part of the Report, we’re examining increased repression and violence of China at camps and towards Uyghurs outside camps in the context of securitization, Sinicization and genocide over interviews conducted by us and addressing dimensions of the repression implemented by China under the name of fight with terrorism.

¹⁸ Interview conducted with Mathias Bölinger on March 23, 2021.

¹⁹ Austin Ramzy and Chris Buckley. (2019). The Xinjiang Papers - ‘Absolutely No Mercy’: Leaked Files Expose How China Organized Mass Detentions of Muslims. New York Times. November 16, 2019.

²⁰ Ben Westcott. (2019). China denies having ‘concentration camps,’ tells US to ‘stop interfering’. CNN. May 6, 2019.

2.1. Securitization and Sinicization

While it is a known fact that Uyghurs are being criminalized due to their ethnic and religious identities, aforesaid so-called crime reasons reveal the severity of the repression implemented by the Chinese administration. Anthropologist Darren Byler, during the interview we conducted, gave examples for religious and cultural bans targeting the Uyghur identity: "It is forbidden to speak Uyghur Turkish language at schools. Owing to microphones installed in classrooms, it is being followed up whether or not students are speaking Uyghur language. They are warned at the first violation of rule and punished at the second violation. Although the Chinese administration claims that mosques are open, mosques that are merely kept open from a symbolic standpoint do not serve any functions. During the time I spent in that region many years ago, I had witnessed Uyghurs saying a prayer after dinner. Now, it is forbidden to say a prayer after dinner. Even phrases such as 'as-salamu alaykum' or 'inshallah (if Allah wills)' are forbidden. Public officials attend funerals and marriage ceremonies. You must sing the Chinese national anthem before getting married. Many Uyghur Turkish writers are under detention. When permitted books in Uyghur language are examined, you see that they are all translations from Chinese. The Uyghur literature with a very old tradition has been deleted to a great extent. Uyghurs are a society of poets and bans for the Uyghur literature is a great loss for the literature world."²¹

All basic Islamic practices to be performed by anyone defining herself/himself as Muslim, no matter wherever they may be in the world, which cannot be considered religious extremism are being considered as religious extremism and securitized and punished by China. Besides, such problematic attitude dates back to an era before concentration camps. During the interview conducted with Abdurahman Satuk, we learn some important details on repression on primary students who fasted: "When I was a student, our teachers would ask 'is there anyone fasting?', we'd say 'none,' trying to dodge the issue. Policies in the place where we lived (Korla) were first being put into practice in Kashgar, Hotan and Aksu then, at our place and finally in Urumqi. "No" answer given to our teachers for the fasting question was replaced by water and candy distribution that started off in years 2004 and 2005. Children were being forced to drink water and eat candy so that they would not be fasting. It was forbidden to go home from school at noon throughout the Ramadan month. Students had to bring food to school. Now, children are being kept at the school so that they won't go to the mosque. During the Ramadan month, watchmen are patrolling in housing complexes to check lights of houses and find out who is up for sahur (meal eaten before starting fasting). They're scoring people according to such checks and those with reduced scores go to the prison or the camp."²²

The control for students fasting or wishing to go to the Friday Prayer, as mentioned by Satuk, had turned into repression and forcing, then, surveillance and blacklisting with watchman controls and, finally, being sent to the prison or the camp over the time. In parallel to Satuk, what we understand from the interview conducted with Baktiali Nur, another victim of camp, is that fasting, performing five daily prayers, going to masjid for Friday Prayer and having a phone call with an imam (religious leader in Islam) are among common reasons for being sent to the camp or forced labor.²³ Cevher İlhami daughter of İlham Tohti, the renowned economist under detention in China, revealed extent of the repression experienced, mentioning the religious greeting Uyghurs had to change or censor during phone calls. According to İlham,

²¹ Interview conducted with Darren Byler on 09.04.2021.

²² Interview conducted with Abdurahman Satuk on 06.04.2021.

²³ Interview conducted with Baktiali Nur on 10.04.2021.

the phrase ‘as-salamu alaykum’ meaning “peace be upon you” used by Muslims for greeting one another is being changed by Uyghurs as “Communist Party be upon you” with the fear of being punished or sent to the camp.²⁴

Interviews conducted by us clearly reveals that the most important objective of the repression implemented by China under the name of ethnic separatism, religious extremism and fight with terrorism is subjecting Uyghurs to a cultural genocide and cleansing their ethnic and religious identities and Sinicization. Pursuant to the migration policy that was put into effect, especially in early 2000s, or, with China’s official description, “Policy on developing the West”, the Chinese people were encouraged to migrate into regions densely populated by Uyghurs and a rapid change started in ethnic composition of such regions. Gülzire Taşmemet living in Germany summarizes the process as follows: “In 2002, they started systematically seizing places where we lived. We had fields and vineyards. The government bought our fields by paying us money, claiming that they were going to build new structures at those places. Then, a government building was moved to a place 3 km away from our neighborhood. They approached to us step by step until 2014. After arrival of the Chinese, a lot changed in the neighborhood. We started hearing people complaining ‘Our life order is upside down.’ Newcomer Chinese people were doing things which they knew we did not like at places where Uyghurs lived. We were unable to resist openly, what everyone only did was to file a complaint. The government building was established and skyscrapers were built. Apparently, government officials were encouraging the Chinese people to move to our neighborhoods. Purpose of this is evacuating our neighborhood and building new structures there, too, and settling the Chinese people. Back in the day, some people would come and say, the government will buy your houses, move to somewhere else. ‘Gulca, where I lived, was a neighborhood where Uyghurs mostly lived. Half of the students at our school were Chinese and the other half of the students were Uyghur. Then, in 2010, we received an instruction telling us that we had to let out vacant houses in our neighborhood to the Chinese people.”²⁵

When looking into details related to the action which Taşmemet described as encouragement of the Chinese to move to regions where Uyghurs lived, we see that the Chinese government is providing those moving to the said region with free houses, extra salary, additional annual income and many other financial supports. Arslan Hidayet, a teacher living in Bahrain, we interviewed summarizes the situation as follows: “Some Chinese people go to Eastern Turkistan just because they suffered from starvation for a long time and are unemployed in their hometowns, thinking to themselves “as long as I can eat, there is nothing else I could do even if I wanted.” They are given free houses. They are paid two times a normal salary and they are happy. This has always been the case. We observed them in the social media, they do not have anything to complain about. Back in 2013, when demonstrations broke out, first, they ran away, yet China encourages them to stay. They want the Chinese population in the region to increase and control the population there. This is not something they do only in Eastern Turkistan, but also in Indian borders. Back then, they did not have a job. Now, they are able to buy whatever they want. Actually, Chinese people are not subject to control like Uyghurs. Eastern Turkistan is better when compared to their own hometowns. Because they have no job in the Mainland China. No money. All they have is the crowd.

²⁴ Interview conducted with Cevher İlham on 20.04.2021.

²⁵ Interview conducted with Gülzire Taşmemet on 05.04.2021.

At this point, China not only had managed to change the ethnic composition of the region but also increased Sinicization pressure over Uyghurs. Abdurahim Geni, who lives in the Netherlands now, gives some examples of Sinicization he witnessed while working as a chemist in Uyghur Autonomous Region: “While even University graduates were unable to find a job in Eastern Turkistan, China had placed 20 Chinese teachers in the pedagogy institute alone where I was working in line with its policy of developing the west. First, numerical subjects started to be taught in Chinese. All subjects started to be taught in Chinese within a month. When Uyghur teachers not fluent in Chinese lost their jobs, they had to work as security guards at schools. Chinese teachers were hired as replacement of teachers who had to retire due to their age. The government was hiring those who graduated from a university these before 2000. After 2000, a test was introduced for teaching and civil servant positions. Age and nationality were among the criteria for passing the test. The test application had two different categories such as Chinese and minority; there was no category such as “Uyghur.” For Uyghurs, there was almost no vacancy for many positions. Nationality was being specified as Chinese. Positions were being opened almost in a manner dedicated to certain names, and minorities were being offered a quota of only 10 percent.”²⁶

It is possible to observe, based on interviews conducted by us, that what is happening there extends to systematic repression and violence at an extent that could be described as cultural genocide, not only as Sinicization. Rabigül Hacimuhammed, a doctoral student, tells about what she went through: “I began elementary school at a Chinese school and had faced difficulty writing the characters. I was the only Uyghur student in class. I did not know I was not Chinese until then. I could not speak; it was difficult to learn Mandarin. The first three-months were hard, I did eventually get used to it a bit but would be punished everyday for not properly writing the characters. My father went to the school to address this, but they only told him, “this is the rule.” I was only 6, I was able to stand it until May. My father took me out of the school and placed me in a Uyghur-medium school. (Afterwards, education in the Uyghur Turkish language was outright abolished). 2017 is the time when Islamic names were forbidden. My surname is Hacimuhammed. According to the new regulation, you cannot have an Islamic name, and names in Uyghur Turkish are also forbidden. Muhammad is forbidden, you cannot say Mehmet, all you can say is Memed. They told my brother that ‘Rabigül will change her surname.’ So, I said, ‘All of my diplomas say the name Hacimuhammed. What about them? Are they going to change my diplomas?’ My brother said ‘do not question it,’ so, I sent a photo of my diploma to the police. They told me, ‘name on it is a forbidden name.’ Then, I asked, ‘according to ministry of education there is no way a diploma can be re-issued, what will happen to my diploma?’ And they told me, ‘Are you teaching us the laws? Do you think that you are something just because you went abroad to study?’”²⁷ At leaked videos showing Uyghur children, whose number is thought to be in hundreds of thousands, seized by the state because their parents were taken to concentration camps, it is clearly seen that children are being deprived of their cultural heritage and Sinicized through education given and bands put into effect. China is both trying to Sinicize Uyghur Turks and subjecting those going through this process to all types of violence regardless of age and normalizes it by calling it a “rule”. According to Gülzire Taşmemet, degree of cultural genocide increased so much that, as part of the sister city project, names of cities and places within Uyghur Autonomous Region matched with cities from mainland China started to be replaced by names of their sister cities and even one hundred-year-old trees at historical streets were cut down and trees brought from Mainland China were planted in their places.²⁸ This mandatory transformation project

²⁶ Interview conducted with Abdurahim Geni on 01.04.2021.

²⁷ Interview conducted with Rabigül Hacimuhammed on 23.03.2021.

²⁸ Interview conducted with Gülzire Taşmemet on 05.04.2021.

which is hard to interpret for anyone living outside China covered not only Uyghurs but also plants reminiscent of the Uyghur culture. Prof. Dr. Abrürreşit Karluk, from the city of Kashgar, says that in all Uyghur cities, ancient centers including architectural monuments of the Uyghur cultural heritage were demolished under the name of “urban transformation” and that was done as part of the said mandatory transformation.²⁹

The Chinese administration, taking advantage of the state of alarm initiated by September 11 attacks, post-Arab Spring unstable era and acts of ISIS that started off all around the world after strengthening in the Middle East, quickly put into practice the camp policy practice and continued to implement its securitization, Sinicization and cultural genocide policies which it was building for many years, using the terrorism as a pretext. We’ll be discussing the genuine purpose for which China that has been implementing a quite complicated plan according to which Uyghurs are being kept under surveillance, control, oppression and violence in every angle is doing all these in the next part.

3. Why is China Doing This?

In the previous part, we mentioned that the ongoing repression and violence towards Uyghurs in Uyghur Autonomous Region turned into a total invasion along with the concentration camps project of which foundations were laid in 2014. In this part, we’re looking for an answer to the question “Why China doing all these?” which is as important as understanding what China is doing.

Xi Jinping and politicians holding an office in his government denied the reality of concentration camps for a while, yet the entire world had found out about the truth thanks to official documents leaked to the media and interviews with camp victims. The government had chosen to accept existence of camps and legitimize them in view of increasing reactions. At concentration camps described as “vocational education” or “re-education” centers, the Chinese government had alleged that Uyghurs including many well-known academicians, business people, athletes and artists had vocational education, thereby, becoming capable of working at better jobs. Over the time, important information was derived about content of the so-called education given at camps thanks to testimonies of individuals who stayed at camps and their relatives. Owing to such information, details regarding Sinicization policy conducted at camps and places densely populated by Uyghurs and common human right violations started to come to light. However, the Chinese administration adopted two important discourses about objective of concentration camps. One of them was religious extremism and fight with terrorism in view of the global terror and ISIS threat that was increasing and the other was fight with ethnic separatism, enhancing Chinese citizenship awareness of Uyghurs.

Both discourses mentioned above have three basic mistakes that rend the Chinese administration irrational, therefore, required to be examined closed in order to understand what is going on. The first one of these is that discourses do not reflect policies actually put into practice, the second one is that policies implemented to fight with dangers specified in discourses are comprised of repression and violence, and the last one is that such repression and violence cause an adverse impact to a great extent and lead to even bigger deadlock instead of solving existing problems.

²⁹ Interview conducted with Prof. Dr. Abrürreşit Karluk on 26.04.2021.

3.1. Fight with “Terrorism and Religious Extremism”

Arguments over religious extremism, radicalization and terrorism have been shaped by crime scientists and researchers conducting state security-based analyses. This way of reading has been abandoned, over the time, due to increased repression and human right violations experienced over different ethnic and religious groups during processes of fight with terrorism and replaced by people- and community-based researches. We owe to such researches our knowledge we have about how fight with terrorism and radicalization can be conducted by prioritizing human rights and which strategies implemented during such fight may lead to an adverse impact and increase risk of terrorism and radicalization to a great extent. Accordingly, when dealing with usual lifestyle, religious practices, cultural symbols and practices reflecting their own identities of a certain race or an ethnic, religious or cultural group as a security problem, the solution becomes distant. Subjecting members of the target group to a systematic repression, casting out, unlawful practices and violence broadens the conflict between the authority and members of the group. Members of the group who see that the authority considers her/him or group including her/him as “other”, potential “criminal” or “terrorist” may lose their belief in their ability to cope with this through legitimate means. Such state of desperation increases the risk of joining radical groups or acts of violence.

Now, let’s think, again, of the strategy pursued by China in Uyghur Autonomous Region in the context of religious extremism and fight with terrorism in view of global terrorism and rising ISIS threat in line with the foregoing summarized information. While the Chinese administration subjected Uyghurs kept in concentration camps against their wills to intense repression and violence as detailed out in following parts of the report, it is watching Uyghurs not yet taken to camps or who managed to get out of camps step by step through a systematic surveillance mechanism. China that has developed the world’s most systematic physical and technologic control strategy intended for an ethnic or religious group is actually causing a certain ethnic group to be securitized and criminalized although it is doing this under the name “fight with terrorism”. In Urumqi where 70 percent of the city’s 2.2 million population is composed of the Han Chinese, police reports digitally recorded about Uyghurs during the period of 2018-2019 alone are comprised of about 250 million lines. The fact that such reports contain many personal data of Uyghurs ranging from registration plate numbers to location data instead of crimes committed shows that method of “fight with terrorism” put into practice is capable of giving rise to an adverse impact.³⁰ Police checkpoints increasing in number at Uyghur Autonomous Region, practices such as “a police station for every village, a police officer for every family”,³¹ following and raids, house controls and many other methods constantly remind Uyghurs that they are “suspects”, “dangerous” and “criminals”.

During the interview conducted with Darren Byler who is best known for his studies related to digital infrastructure and surveillance system in Uyghur Autonomous Region, we’re learning some striking information on technologic control mechanism run jointly by the Chinese administration and technology companies: “China is following movements of people through cameras and checkpoints with the mechanism called ‘secure city systems’ and preparing lists containing potential criminals. We see that the said situation goes to extreme points in Uyghur Autonomous Region, not only those released from camps or their relatives but also a lot more people are included in lists of tracking. I call this ‘flexible surrounding system.’

³⁰ Darren Byler. (2021). Chinese Infrastructures of Population Management on the New Silk Road. Essays on the Rise of China and Its Implications. March 2021. Accessed on May 24, 2021.

³¹ İlham Tohti. (2015). Hapisteki Lider İlham Tohti Yolum ve Gayem: Uygur Türkleri ve Çin Meselesi. Şıra Publications. September 2015. Compiled by Hamit Göktürk. p: 231.

Technology companies see Uyghur Autonomous Region as a laboratory where they can try technologies developed by them in order to keep Muslims fully under surveillance. Thus, they believe that they can export such technologies which are getting more and more dangerous to the other countries. Therefore, Chinese companies aim to become a leader in production of such surveillance and control technologies.”³²

Tommy Zwicky, one of the high-ranking executives of Huawei, the Chinese technology giant, in Denmark, had resigned, alleging that the company is developing technologies used for human right violations. Zwicky shared some information on the technology developed by his former company during the interview conducted by us: “Tests we ran in Denmark had to be ran with salmon fish. We placed more than 10,000 in this system at artificial ponds. If they got sick, they could make other fish sick, too. A camera is capable of individually detecting a sick Salmon fish from its face and taking it out. Thus, we can keep others healthy. Basically, it is the same equipment as this one. Back then, this was all I knew about this. I mean it is up to us to use that system functionally. It is up to people to use it from an ethical point of view. Huawei used to say: “we are always selling legal equipment, yet we cannot interfere if others use them in a non-ethical manner.” For instance, this is something like Boko Haram using Toyota. We cannot blame Toyota company because of that. Likewise, we cannot blame Huawei for surveillance of Uyghurs. This was what I was told and believed. This is an important matter. However, Huawei documents leaked to the media proved that we did not only sell equipment but also watched ethnic groups, notably, Uyghurs. I do not know much about Uyghurs. It is still the same, I still do not know. But this does not really matter. We need to observe human rights. This community could be another ethnic group treated as a minority and oppressed by the other companies. This was the basic motivation for my resignation. I had lost my trust in the company. In this case, I would not be able to work there.”³³

The fact that President Xi described Uyghurs kept at concentration camps against their wills as “individuals who need to be treated and should never be shown mercy for they have virus in their minds” and put millions of people in the category of dangerous patients summarizes the situation.³⁴ Besides, basic Islamic practices performed by many Muslims all around the world (choice for halal meat, wearing a head scarf, keeping Quran at home, etc..) are considered crime elements and are prohibited. During the interview we have conducted with Arslan Hidayet, a music teacher, we derive some important information about Sibling Family Project which turns out to be designed in order to watch life of the Uyghur family and for their Sinicization even if it is claimed that it has been developed to strengthen relations between the Chinese and Uyghurs. Hidayet says that, during mutual visits paid by Chinese and Uyghur families which were mandatory as part of such project in which everyone had a Chinese sibling from opposite gender, Chinese families, from time to time, served pork to Uyghur families and daughters of Uyghur families were harassed by older Chinese men who were matched with them.³⁵

³² Interview conducted with Darren Byler on 09.04.2021.

³³ Interview conducted with Tommy Zwicky on 27.05.2021.

³⁴ Austin Ramzy and Chris Buckley. (2019). Absolutely No Mercy: Leaked Files Expose How China Organized Mass Detentions of Muslims. The New York Times. November 16, 2019. Accessed on May 27, 2021.

³⁵ Interview conducted with Arslan Hidayet on 25.03.2021.

Results led by mandatory practices similar to foregoing example and aforesaid religious bans mentioned make ideas of jihadist radical groups calling for armed fight popular. Therefore, China is not fighting with the terrorism or religious extremism, rather, is preparing the ground for Uyghurs to be thrown to the terrorism and religious extremism and trying to legitimize its religious and cultural repression over Uyghurs. Although every Uyghur living in Uyghur Autonomous Region is carefully tracked and controlled in both physical and technologic terms, paths leading to jihadist groups in Syria remaining open and number of Uyghurs fighting in Syria support our argument.³⁶

Before 2015, it was quite difficult for a Uyghur to travel out of China through legal or illegal means. All Uyghurs we have interviewed agree on how difficult it was to obtain passport and visa from 2009 to 2015 for them without exception. The reason behind making it easier to obtain passport and visa, all of a sudden in 2015, and encouragement by the state in this regard and ease of travelling abroad came to light when widespread detentions began in 2016. Those who travelled abroad, ones whose relatives travelled out or those in contact with their relatives living abroad were at the top of the list of individuals to be taken to concentration camps. Exception to hardship for Uyghurs to travel out of China before 2015 was Uyghurs who travelled to Syria with the encouragement of Salafi propagandists who were given freedom of movement unlike traditional Uyghur theologists. Despite of China's superior technologic control systems and physical restrictions, Uyghurs directed with the radical Salafi propaganda to war zones were able to easily pass through borders and go to Syria.

Prof. Dr. Abdürreşit Karluk, a Uyghur many of whose relatives from the city of Kashgar were kept in concentration camps, points out that Uyghurs have a tolerant religion understanding and, during the Arab Spring, rising oppressive policies of China targeted the tolerant Uyghur school instead of Salafi movements. Prof. Karluk tells about the process by saying: "Actually this is a situation we, as Uyghurs, went through twice and we're still going through. The first one was when, back in 80s, the Chinese Communist Party which thought that the image of "good Uyghur" that had become widespread across China was dangerous criminalized and marginalized Uyghurs in 90s and thereafter. Children from Uyghur region were systematically abducted and made available to crime organizations in Mainland China. Therefore, the Uyghur image was coded as "objectionable" in the Chinese public opinion. The second started in 2010s. Following the Arab Spring, radical organizations had started to gain enormous strength in the Middle East. China wishing to exploit sensitivity of the Western world did not touch radical propagandists of a very limited number in the region where ordinary Muslims had difficulty in performing the most basic prayers and even the breathe taken by Uyghurs was controlled. They increased their influence and numbers since China deliberately left them alone, and they took thousands of misled people from the region to the Middle East. At times when they were able to pass through the Chinese border easily, it was quite surprising for any Uyghur to pass through the border. As more and more videos showing Uyghurs from the close combat zones came, China told western countries, 'Look, our enemies are the same,' and further increased the repression on Uyghurs. Chinese Communist Party administration paved the way for thousands of Uyghurs to go to the war zone by allowing a radical religious understanding with which Uyghur people is not familiar to exist in the region and make its propaganda. Then, China captivated millions of innocent Uyghurs in concentration camps by showing those thousands of Uyghurs as a reason. Those closely following China noticed what is going on, a bit late though, China had already achieved its goal."³⁷

³⁶ Abdullah Al-Ghadhawi. (2020). Uighur Jihadists in Syria. Newlines Institute for Strategy and Politics. March 18, 2020.

³⁷ Interview conducted with Abdürreşit Karluk on 26.04.2021.

3.2. Fight with “Ethnic Separatism”

It is possible to observe the same irrationality in the Chinese administration’s allegation that fighting with ethnic separatism, thereby, developing Chinese citizenship of Uyghurs, another discourse regarding purpose of concentration camps. In a speech delivered by President Xi last year, he had claimed that, while defending the project of concentration camps, thanks to the so-called education given in such camps, gain, happiness and sense of security increased for all ethnic groups from Uyghur Autonomous Region. In the same speech, he had pointed out that camps should be adopted as a long-term policy of China, and such policy was critical in order to educate Xinjiang people to understand the Chinese nation and enable all ethnic groups to have a correct perspective about their country, history and nationality.³⁸ However, based on our interviews and official documents leaked to the media so far, we know that, apart from human right violations taking place in concentration camps, the mandatory education given is intended to replace the language of Uyghurs with Mandarin Chinese set as the common language of the country, preventing them from carrying on their religious practices, assuring loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party and destroy the Uyghur identity with a view to assuring ethnic unity in the nation, not teaching the Chinese history and culture. Therefore, it is not rational to expect that a policy of this sort will bring about the gain, happiness and trust mentioned by President Xi.

In order to understand policies implemented by the Chinese administration in Uyghur Autonomous Region for the purpose of fighting with ethnic separatism and why such policies are likely to give rise an adverse impact, it is necessary to examine the approach of relative deprivation of Ted Gurr which reached out to large groups of people and are frequently referred to in ethnic politics and conflict literature through his book called “Why Men Rebel”.³⁹ According to such approach, especially as a result of separatist policies implemented by the authority, a group within the same society feels that they remain behind when compared to the other group or groups or are relatively deprived of opportunities accessible for the other groups, disappointment felt in view of such feeling of deprivation may turn into anger and hostility towards the other groups and aggression and violence against the authority. Similarly, feeling such disappointment for a long time in a pronounced manner leads to a rise in ethnic tension and makes it turn into a conflict.

In line with the relative deprivation approach and interviews conducted by us, we ascertain that the fact that ethnic policy pursued by the Chinese administration in Uyghur Autonomous Region aimed to assure ethnic homogeneity by encouraging settlement of Chinese people in regions densely populated by Uyghurs under the name of “Development of the West” that was especially put into practice starting from early 2000s increased the ethnic tension in the region. Uyghurs whose house and fields were acquired within scope of this policy, after being told that the state was to build new buildings, state that the Chinese were settled in these places soon. The Chinese who moved to the region as a result of the policy by the Chinese in Uyghur Autonomous Region with the financial incentive by the Chinese administration were given houses, extra salary, additional annual income and jobs in which they were able to get promoted to good positions. The Chinese starting to live in the region were able to grasp opportunities they would have never been able to have in the mainland China whereas opportunities the Uyghurs had were taken from them quickly. The Uyghurs with a university degree are, with all other minority groups, evaluated in a separate category and can file for 10 percent, set aside for them, of job applications opened. While most of Uyghur teachers

³⁸ ABC News. (2020). Chinese President Xi Jinping defends Xinjiang detention network, claiming ‘happiness’ is on the rise. Accessed on May 24, 2021.

³⁹ Ted Robert Gurr. (1970). Why Men Rebel(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970).

and researchers working in the regions were laid off, newcomer Chinese of the region are being placed in their jobs. The migration policy had also brought quite strict prohibitions, and restrictions over language, cultural rituals and lifestyles of Uyghurs had soared. Tahir Hamut, a Uyghur intellectual living in the USA, with whom we have conducted an interview, says that, recently, people teaching in the Uyghur language and materials of Uyghur intellectuals such as books, films are being retrospectively examined and they have started accusing creators of works of art such as division of the state, advocacy of ethnic separatism. As a result of ethnic policies that became harsh starting from 2016, he reports that Turkish advertisements and sale of Turkish products have been banned, too.⁴⁰

This is the conclusion we draw as a result of the foregoing picture: It is highly likely that Uyghurs have the relative deprivation feeling by comparing privileges offered by the state to the Chinese whose population increases day by day in Uyghur Autonomous Region to injustices they have suffered from. Such feeling not only feeds the ethnic tension between Uyghurs and the Chinese and pushes those individuals who engulf in the deprivation feeling to believe that violence is the solution. Therefore, China is not fighting with ethnic separatism just like it is not fighting with terrorism or religious extremism. On the contrary, China is preparing the ground for Uyghurs to be thrown to ethnic separatist ideas and violence and trying to legitimize its religious and cultural repression over Uyghurs in the eyes of the other countries.

3.3. Global Hegemony

There is an important reason, which Chinese administration avoids emphasizing most of the time, for the repression implemented by China, a giant of economy and technology rising rapidly against the USA, over Uyghurs with a dose increasing day by day on: The Belt and Road Initiative, in other words, One Belt, one Road Project or the New Silk Road Project. The Belt and Road Initiative announced by President Xi in 2013 which is described as one of the most ambitious infrastructure projects ever designed,⁴¹ is a trade and technology project aiming to interconnect all countries that lies in the area covered by the project in physical, economic and technologic terms. There are 6 economic corridors in the part of the project called “Economic Belt of Silk Road” intended to be developed in land: (1) New Eurasia Land Corridor, (2) China-Central Asia-Western Asia Corridor, (3) China-Pakistan Corridor, (4) Bangladesh - China - Myanmar Corridor, (5) China-Mongolia-Russia Corridor and (6) China- Indochina Peninsula Corridor. “21st Century Maritime Silk Road” part of the project that is planned to be on the sea aims to connect China to Europe via Southeastern Asia, Indonesia, India, Arab Peninsula, Somali, Egypt and the Mediterranean through South China Sea, Strait of Malacca, Indian Ocean, Bengal Bay, Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf.⁴² It is aimed to connect regions lying in these corridors to one another via any and all types of physical and digital means such as roads, bridges, ports, railroads, oil and natural gas lines that may help foster political and economic relations between regions. The project which the Chinese government intends to complete by 2050 is expected to cost \$4 to 8 trillion.⁴³

⁴⁰ Interview conducted with Tahir Hamut on 24.04.2021.

⁴¹ Andrew Chatzky and James McBride. (2020). “China’s Massive and Road Initiative,” Council on Foreign Relations. January 28, 2020. Accessed on May 24, 2021.

⁴² BRI. Belt and Road Initiative. Accessed on May 24, 2021.

⁴³ BRI. Belt and Road Initiative. Accessed on May 24, 2021.



In the light of the foregoing information given by us about the project, it is not difficult to predict how big political, economic and even social changes to be globally caused by the project will be once it is put into practice. It is estimated that this project that will surround the world will make China get closer to its global hegemony target despite of the USA with which it is in a cutthroat competition in the international system. Even if the economic aspect of the project is emphasized, it is expected to create a powerful impact which will enable China to increase its military existence and political influence in countries with which it is in contact. Thus, the Chinese management will be able to dispose of the “Return to Asia” policy, frequently uttered during Obama era, before it is able to thrive enough.

Although the Belt and Road Initiative is considered as a new initiative China has started to develop for the purpose of global hegemony, China has actually been trying smaller scale models of the project in different countries for a long time. For instance, the Chinese administration that sat down at the table with Iran in March of this year signed a 25-year cooperation agreement. With this agreement they call “Comprehensive Strategic Partnership”, two countries will be in and dialogue with one another, for 25 years, in many areas ranging from telecommunication to energy trade, healthcare to defense cooperation. Another development intended to materialize within the scope of the said agreement is the consensus that China will have 5000 troops in the Iran soil so long as the agreement is in full force and effect.⁴⁴ To sum up, China will position its military existence and impact in a strategic point of the Middle East for 25 years owing to an agreement signed with the intention of “economic cooperation”. China that is currently training Afghan soldiers in Afghanistan with which it has built a connection via Uyghur Autonomous Region and promised to cover all costs for establishment of a military base in Badakhshan province of the country neighboring Uyghur Autonomous Region,⁴⁵ has taken one step forward its military effectiveness in the region following the right of having soldiers in Iran.

The fact that the gate through which the Belt and Road Initiative will open up to the world through China geographically lies in Uyghur Autonomous Region is one of the basic reasons of the Sinicization policy harshly implemented by China in the region. The Chinese administration

⁴⁴ Iran International. (2021). Iranians Weary Of Secrecy Around Pact With China, Officials Remain Silent. Accessed on May 24, 2021.

⁴⁵ Catherine Putz. (2018). Why Would China Help Build an Afghan Military Base in Badakhshan?. The Diplomat. January 5, 2018. Accessed on May 24, 2021.

is planning to impact many countries, thereby, achieve its global hegemony target with “the Belt and Road Initiative” is disturbed by the existence of Uyghurs described by it as “sick”, “dangerous” and “potential terrorist” and not categorized by it as reasonable citizens due to their ethnic religious and cultural differences in the region where this project is going to open up to the world. The policy of accusations, arbitrary arrests and keeping in concentration camps against will implemented towards Uyghurs in the region has taken a more severe dimension starting from launch of the Belt and Road Initiative, which supports our claim. In summary, China wants the starting point of the Chinese hegemony to be “Chinese” at the level desired by it and continues to strictly implement securitization and Sinicization policies towards Uyghurs in order to make such aspiration come true

Countless studies conducted in both political economy and international relations discipline reveals importance of making maximum effort by a country in terms of human rights and enforcement of the law in order for such country to reach and maintain economic development or build lasting and peaceful relations with the other countries. The fact that the Chinese administration is building belts and roads with the aim of contacting a vast geography from all aspects, on one side, and is increasing dose of human rights violations towards Uyghurs every passing day for the purpose of Sinicization of the region and trying to legalize its unlawful practices, on the other side, shows how irrational steps taken by China on the path to global hegemony are. Just as we have observed in policies pursued by it for fight with terrorism, religious extremism and ethnic separatism, which it calls three evil powers, which led to an adverse impact, China is actually preventing achievement of this target with oppressive policies pursued by it in line with its global hegemony target.

4. Fundamental Freedoms in Uyghur Autonomous Region

4.1. Problem of Education in Uyghur Turkish

Uyghurs, the ancient people of Uyghur Autonomous Region, speak Uyghur Turkish which is the mother tongue of Mahmud al-Kashgari, renowned scholar, who wrote the oldest of Turkish known in the 11th century. Since they started settled life before the other communities speaking Turkic languages in nearby regions, their written literature is higher in number when compared to their relative communities. It is one of the regions that raised highest number of scientists and artists in the vast geography of Turkistan.

It can be said that China had a permanent repression on Uyghur Turkish language since 1949 although its severity varied from era to era. The hardest and longest era of oppression on Uyghur language is the process that started in late 90s which is at its most intense phase today.

Aziz İsa Elkun, living in the UK, one of several intellectuals we have interviewed on such systematic repressions, says, “At Xinjiang University, engineering students were able to take classes in Uyghur Turkish. The prep class only had basic Chinese classes. At the end of 1990, Uyghur Turkish was removed from the university education. It was removed from primary schools in 2000s. It was entirely wiped out as of 2010. The genuine purpose behind the bilingual education was detaching the Uyghur Turkish from education.”⁴⁶ Tahir Hamut, well-known Uyghur poet and author, summarizes what happened by saying, “From 1976 to 1990, Uyghur Turkish was essentially used in the education, even numerical subjects were taught in the Uyghur Turkish at universities. After nineteen ninety, the bilingual education politics was born. With the advent of the bilingual education politics, numerical classes started to

⁴⁶ Interview conducted with Aziz İsa Elkun on 31.03.2021.

be taught in Chinese at universities in particular. Then, teaching language slowly shifted to Chinese at primary schools and secondary schools. Bilingual education was an important research subject for İlham Tohti. İlham was a supporter of bilingual education but what he advocated was both Uyghur Turkish and Chinese, yet the state shifted towards Chinese and English in practice, by wiping out the Uyghur Turkish. The said bilingual education was a politics planned for a long time, not only for a couple of years. Eventually, the Uyghur Turkish was entirely removed from education.”⁴⁷

Actually, according to the Chinese Constitution, there are many areas where Uyghur Autonomous Region is free to enforce its own official policies due to its autonomous structure. Education in Uyghur Turkish is one of such areas. However, the Central Chinese Government continues to ignore the constitution which is considered reputation for a nation state, in words of İlham Tohti, a Uyghur academician and a well-respected activist in the eyes of the society. Such case is, from time to time, being put into words via academic articles by the Chinese intelligence. The article from 2004 by Marung, Sociology Professor from Peking University titled “A new thought style in relations of nations passes through politicizing the matter of minorities” recommends that China rule out the Soviet style autonomy system and transform all ethnic groups within one culture.⁴⁸

Abdurahim Geni, the Uyghur chemist living in the Netherlands, explains developments related to the institution where he used to work; “Great numbers of Chinese were coming to our region in line with China’s so-called “developing the west” politics. They had placed 20 Chinese teachers in the pedagogy institute alone where I was working. Back then, I thought to myself, “If 20 professors came to one university, who knows what happened in general!”. Then, numerical subjects started to be taught in Chinese. All subjects started to be taught in Chinese within a month. Uyghur teachers not fluent in Chinese lost their jobs. Uyghur teachers were appointed as security guards to schools.. Teachers were working in many places, in those days, ranging from cleaning to student dormitories of schools. Elderly teachers were getting retired and they were being replaced by the Chinese.”⁴⁹ Rabigül Hacimuhammed depicts the situation witnessed by her by saying, “My teachers at the school were being dismissed and appointed to other jobs, out of necessity, once teaching language suddenly became Chinese. Some of our teachers even ended up becoming security guards the gate.”⁵⁰ It is seen that taking their jobs from intellectuals in Uyghur Autonomous Region and discrediting them is a planned state policy that has been going on for some time.

4.2. Freedom of Belief

The Uyghur community is being subjected to a constant repression as is the case in many areas. The Uyghur is the structure that is the most distinct one from the Chinese community, from among ethnic groups, in respect of cultural and societal indicators. One of the fundamental elements of such difference is that they are Muslims. Such effect is predominantly felt in the verbal and written culture of the region’s people and their architecture. Any forced transformation that is to take place is in the form of an attack at the people’s religious values. Şehide Ali who lived in Kashgar draws attention to the architectural dimension of such intervention. “We used to live in the city center when I was there. When I was at the high school, they started changing things with old houses there, using restoration

⁴⁷ Interview conducted with Tahir Hamut on 24.04.2021.

⁴⁸ İlham Tohti. (2015). Hapisteki Lider İlham Tohti Yolum ve Gayem: Uygur Türkleri ve Çin Meselesi. Şıra Publications. September 2015. Compiled by Hamit Göktürk. p: 85.

⁴⁹ Interview conducted with Abdurahim Geni on 01.04.2021.

⁵⁰ Interview conducted with Rabigül Hacimuhammed on 23.03.2021.

as the pretext. Then, they moved on to mosques. There was one mosque that dated back to the 11th century where Mahmud al-Kashgari used to lecture. They even changed it and built something else in its place. The transformation started bit by bit. I watched in the news after 2018 what they did to cemeteries and mosques and how mosques were turned into clubs for having fun”.⁵¹ Abdulhaber Recep, a camp victim says: “There were 20 large mosques in the city center of Hotan. We heard that, in 2017; only two mosques survived and all other mosques were demolished. some of those mosques were 300 to 400 years old. There was the historical Kızıkbazar mosque and they demolished it, too.”⁵² Aziz İsa Elkun, who has pointed out that apart from assets and worshipping places with cultural heritage value, cemeteries, too, underwent a change, which are quite important for the Uyghur culture, describes what he went through by saying; “I realized that my father’s grave had been destroyed through Google maps. The grave was in Gulca, our district. I had visited the grave when I travelled to my hometown in 2017, it was there. Reuters of France covered this as a news story and they went to the place where I was born. This is what they saw: China built a new cemetery in concrete, yet old graves are gone.”⁵³



⁵¹ Interview conducted with Şehide Ali on 27.03.2021.

⁵² Interview conducted with Abdulhaber Recep on 06.04.2021.

⁵³ Interview conducted with Aziz İsa Elkun on 31.03.2021.

There are a lot of things that touch upon daily lives of people in Qoran, the holy book of Muslims, teachings of Muhammad (SAV), Islam Prophet, as well as the region's local religious accumulation. People's drinking-eating habits, special day rituals, methods of doing good deeds, clothing choices, etc., have turned into a permanent cultural asset and have become comprehensive involving, most of the time, unbelievers. It is seen more distinctly among Uyghurs the ancient people of the region, notably, in southern parts. However, almost all reflections of such natural state are considered by the Chinese Communist Party under headings such as radicalism radicalism, separatism and terrorism. The most usual practices and choices deemed to be ordinary have been instrumentalized as a "mark" in order for the Uyghur to be criminalized. Alfira Nurmuhammed says; "I was getting attention of the police since I was wearing a head scarf outside, so, I did not go out so frequently. I started having a traditional religious education. We would hide religious books on our belly and hide our shoes when we went to the hodja's house."⁵⁴ Şehide Ali who faced repression because she was wearing head scarf says; "A Chinese teacher from our school saw me when I was outside and wearing a head scarf and reported me to the school administration. The the administration made me sign a document that says on it "I won't believe ever again and I won't wear a head scarf."⁵⁵

Uygur Abdulhaber Recep, a camp victim, has witnessed religious reflections and rituals to be considered as separatism and terrorism: "There is a list with 70 items. Most of the list items include religious rituals. Performing such rituals are considered under crimes of terrorism, extremism and separatism. Wearing hijab, checking if things are halal or haram, having a beard, wearing short pants, wearing the watch on right wrist are forbidden, yet these are considered proofs extremism, separatism or terrorism. If someone is wearing her/his watch on right wrist and a Uyghur, that person can be taken to the camp."⁵⁶

Abdurahman Satuk from city of Korla says, "t schools, our teachers were asking us whether or not we were fasting. Before that, they would leave us alone when we said, "no" to that question. Then, they started handing out candy and water bit by bit. When we said that we were not fasting, they would tell us to eat candy, if we did not eat the candy, they would know that we were fasting. It was forbidden to go home at noon during Ramadan. Students were forced to bring lunch to the school so that they would not fast."⁵⁷ Rabigül who had a similar experience says, "At schools, they would not give us food, yet they would place food on tables during Ramadan and they would force us to eat food.", quite similarly to Satuk.⁵⁸

Mirzahmet İlyasoğlu says; "They installed a camera in the mosque, but not for security, it was intended to identify us. Cases of theft were quite rare in our hometown. The real purpose was identification. To learn who goes to the mosque. Then, people started going to the mosque less and less. It turns out that they were filming prayers performed by civil servants, teachers and students at the mosque. People started having cold feet, on the ground of such panic and nervousness. And then, this situation become official gradually."⁵⁹ Ömerbek Ali, a victim of camp, draws attention to the fact that such video records were evidence preparation for camps; "They started checking people's identities when stepping into mosques. People had to swipe their identities through devices in order to step into a mosque and all these were

⁵⁴ Interview conducted with Alfira Nurmuhammed on 07.04.2021.

⁵⁵ Interview conducted with Şehide Ali on 27.03.2021.

⁵⁶ Interview conducted with Abdulhaber Recep on 06.04.2021.

⁵⁷ Interview conducted with Abdurahman Satuk on 06.04.2021.

⁵⁸ Interview conducted with Rabigül Hacimuhammed on 23.03.2021.

⁵⁹ Interview conducted with Mirzahmet İlyasoğlu on 08.04.2021.

being recorded in the system. They have recently brought up records as elements of crime. After Urumqi massacre in Eastern Turkistan (2009) they started placing these devices in almost all mosques.”⁶⁰

More organized and institutional repressions intended to suspend the freedom of belief are also in progress at a very intense level. Administration of Uyghur Autonomous Region has countless circulars on the religion; civil servants are not allowed to go to the mosque, and those working at the industrial sector, service sector and businesses are not allowed to go to the mosque. Teachers, students, women, children, anyone younger than 18 years of age are not allowed to go to mosque and perform prayer.⁶¹

The foundation of the China’s project of transforming Uyghurs into ethnic Chinese seems to have been configured on removing whatever it is that makes a human Uyghur from her or him forcibly or placing the ideology of the Communist Party. To that end, belief (Islam), Uyghur Turkish and family structure are at the top of the list of items to be removed from the Uyghur identity. There are many testimonies confirming that those having Qoran at their homes have been taken to concentration camps and religious books have been collected and burnt. Therefore, since Uyghurs and Kazakhs find it dangerous to keep religious books at home, they have to hide and protect them by burying such books in the ground. Obligation caused people to find other options: We know that people leave their religious books wrapped in bags or of which pages are placed in bottles to river Ili that flows from Uyghur Region (parts nearby Kazakhstan border) to Kazakhstan and people in Kazakhstan territory outside the border of China save those Qorans in as many numbers as they possibly can and protect them.



The Qur’an that was thrown into the Ili River from the Chinese Uyghur Autonomous Region and extracted by the Aidarly villagers of Kazakhstan’s Panfilov district. (Digitized the real photo.)

⁶⁰ Interview conducted with Ömerbek Ali on 24.03.2021.

⁶¹ İlham Tohti. (2015). Hapisteki Lider İlham Tohti Yolum ve Gayem: Uyghur Türkleri ve Çin Meselesi. Şıra Publications. September 2015. Compiled by Hamit Göktürk. p: 229.

4.3. Personal Rights and Freedom of Expression

Apart from religious restrictions, Uyghurs are exposed to discrimination and inequality in terms of language and culture rights. Ban on Islamic names in the region starting from 2017 is one of most fundamental culture right violations Uyghurs are faced with. Rabigül Hacimuhammed, who was born in the city of Korla and completed her undergraduate and graduate studies in Beijing explains the situation: “Names given may not be Uyghur Turkish and may not contain any Islamic elements. Muhammad is forbidden, you cannot say Mehmet. The police asked me for photos of my diploma, so, I sent them. They told me, ‘name on it is a forbidden name, you have to change it.’”



*In a village near Kashgar, Uyghur children dressed in traditional Chinese clothes.
(Digitized the real photo.)*

Uyghurs are not only discriminated, cast out and controlled in the region but also in the mainland China. Rabigül shares the identity control she goes through all the time, saying: “We would always be faced with identity control wherever we may go. We would have to undergo different controls other people would not have to. The police would follow us until graduation from the university. There were times when we would be denied access to sightseeing locations. When I travelled to Shanghai, we wanted to visit a museum, yet they did not admit us for we were Uyghur.”⁶² Rabigül gives examples on experiences Uyghurs were faced with and were deprived of: “When staying at a hotel, they would take our facial records and I do not know about the system they used. This was something they did for Uyghurs alone. This started after 2009. Starting from that year, they did not give us hotel rooms whenever we had friends coming from other places. We were asking if there had a vacancy, the answer would be “yes”, yet when they see that our identity number starts with 65⁶³, they would say “there is no room.”⁶⁴

⁶² Interview conducted with Rabigül Hacimuhammed on 23.03.2021

⁶³ Identity numbers of Uyghurs who are Chinese citizens starts with 65.

⁶⁴ Interview conducted with Rabigül Hacimuhammed on 23.03.2021.



Personal rights, one of the untouchable, non-transferrable and irrevocable rights of Uyghurs, are faced with an open and intense attack. Abdullah Rasul, one of Uyghurs we have interviewed reveals how their personal rights have been violated by sharing the following example: “Starting from late 2014, they started placing cameras in places where Uyghurs live. These cameras have been installed at the entrance to every building including entrances to flats and buildings. Those cameras were Huawei cameras like vision-tech. After such installment, some part of the camera fell, along with some papers, on the floor and my wife took them. My wife read them and it was something like a user manual. If the camera stays off for five seconds, it turns out that the camera sends a call to the police station. It was a camera fitted with facial recognition. There was one window through which one could see the bathroom from the corridor where the camera was installed. We had a really hard time during Ramadan months. We had to be extremely cautious when entering the bathroom for ablution, fearing that they would see the light.”⁶⁵ Due to such human rights violations, entrance by Uyghurs into shopping malls, libraries, hospitals and many areas that are basic components of the daily life are being restricted.

Property rights, one of the personal rights, grants individuals the authority of using properties owned by them, availing and disposing of those properties upon their free wills. Ömer Faruk, a Uyghur businessperson we have interviewed, explains that properties of Uyghurs are confiscated due to their identities, saying: “My elder brothers were well-respected businessmen. They were in construction business and doing well financially. A Chinese working with my elder brother called me to inform that my elder brothers had been arrested. He said, ‘They took all people like your elder brothers, the rich, and your assets were confiscated.’ We had three to four restaurants and we had assets worth \$100 million. We’re a well-known family in the city of Korla.”⁶⁶ Sudinisa Abdulim of Hotan confirms what is commonly told by people, saying: “My family was doing very well moneywise. My husband was engaged in international trade. In 2014, they were arresting and imprisoning those engaged in trade in Eastern Turkistan. They were confiscating remaining assets of people.”⁶⁷ K. Altay says: “We had buildings in the most popular part of the city and they confiscated all of our buildings. When we were, back in the day, billionaires, my father would transfer money to me, now, it is me transferring money.”⁶⁸

Freedom of expression is defined as learning, acquiring and giving any and all ideas and information, without restriction, from verbal, written and printed sources. However, both Uyghurs and Uyghur intellectuals are deprived of the freedom of expressing their critiques and thoughts Abdulveli Ayup, Uyghur intellectual, explains this situation as follows; “I was accepted to a university in Beijing in 1992 and stayed there for five years. I learnt a lot when I was there. There was more freedom there. I read the novel called 1984 by George Orwell there. It was very hard to merely mention that book in Eastern Turkistan, yet it was possible to read that book in Beijing. We would say, “this is what it is like in Beijing, yet this was how it was back in our hometown.” We would not say Eastern Turkistan, instead, we would say in our hometown. Even taxi drivers were able to criticize the Chinese Communist Party in China and they had more freedom there. Freedoms in the mainland China were being protected, partially though, we are, too, entitled to take advantage of the same law as citizens of China. I had really liked that freedom. I thought that we should have taken advantage of the same rights and felt the discrimination policy even deeper. Before I turned 18, I had no idea about what the freedom was, what freedom of thought, people’s ability of think freely meant”.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Interview conducted with Abdullah Rasul on 06.04.2021.

⁶⁶ Interview conducted with Ömer Faruk on 07.04.2021.

⁶⁷ Interview conducted with Sudinisa Abdulim on 07.04.2021.

⁶⁸ Interview conducted with K. Altay on 27.03.2021.

⁶⁹ Interview conducted with Abdulveli Ayup on 26.03.2021.

5. Camps

Human rights scorecard of China had never a good performance in any known era. In places such as Uyghur Autonomous Region and Tibet which are sensitive for China, life was quite difficult for prominent figures in the field of politics, culture and belief, even at times when large masses were relatively and partially free. Tahir Hamut, Uyghur poet, who was detained while traveling out of China for academic education in 1996, had a broken rib during the interrogation. The poet who stayed in Urumqi Prison for a year and a half says that being deprived of water and food was a normal practice for them. Tahir Hamut tells that, he was transferred to Kashgar after a year and a half, he had to work at manual labor under 24-hour supervision of police.⁷⁰ In cases when the crime attributed cannot be proven, China has a long history of force labor as a method of punishment.

Abdulveli Ayup, philologist and author, who was arrested in Kashgar in 2013 and stayed in the prison for 15 months, described, at the interview we have conducted with him, the torture he suffered from during his interrogation that lasted for 6 months: "In Kashgar, it was first interrogation and then torture, then again interrogation followed by torture. I was transferred to Urumqi following the phase of interrogation - torture. There, too, I was faced with, first, torture in the interrogation room, then, I was sent to the ward. They deprived me of sleep for 2,5 days. Interrogation was going on inside a cell at all times, they would disappear for couple of hours following interrogation and they would come back, throw water at your face and then interrogation, again. There two police officers on both sides and three interrogation police officers in front of you. Ones standing by you threaten you, saying, "if you do not speak, this or that is going to happen." You can hardly keep your eyes open because of lack of sleep, they also give you pills, which are white and really small. After taking it, it wakes you up, but after a while, its effect wanes and you start sleeping. They touch electrified baton to your armpits. That makes you tremble a lot and causes a great pain in the heart. You're out of breath and your whole body is quaking. There are some 1000 W lights standing close to you, which are very strong lights that disturb your eyes even if you close them. Electrified baton can give you electricity for only 20 minutes. It takes 1 hour to charge it, so, the electricity-free torture goes on for 1 hour while it is getting charged. The body swells due to torture. When your body swells, you have to wash it with cold water even if it hurts, then you'll rub the body to reduce the pain."⁷¹

5.1. Types of Camps

Basically, there are five types of centers, known as concentration camps, which are described by China as "re-education, vocational training, transformation": i) Temporary surveillance centers, ii) Concentration camps, iii) Forced labor centers, iv) Children's camps, v) Prisons

Camps which basically have 5 types differ from one another in terms of conditions prevailing thereat. Not all conditions at temporary surveillance centers or concentration camps are exactly the same.

⁷⁰ Interview conducted with Tahir Hamut on 24.04.2021.

⁷¹ Interview conducted with Abdulveli Ayup on 26.03.2021.

5.1.1. Temporary Surveillance Centers

Too crowded places, due to detentions of masses, which have spread across the entire Uyghur Autonomous Region including its smallest towns. Since existing centers were unable to accommodate people detained, detention centers quickly transformed from a school or a plant are also widely used. These are the centers where detained people are interrogated for the first time and the first decision as to where they will be transferred is made. It is possible for one to stay at these centers for either weeks or months. The Chinese Communist Party propaganda lasting for several hours starts here. Those accepting accusations and signing a confession text for not being able to withstand tortures during the interrogation are, mostly, transferred from here to prisons or centers of forced labor, whereas those resisting to accept are transferred to concentration camps to a large extent.



*A concentration camp near Urumqi.
(Digitized the real photo.)*

5.1.2. Concentration Camps

People who are considered to be doubtful as to loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party in blacklisting files issued about them, those not willing to accept crimes attributed during the interrogation or people added to the list so that number of detentions expected by superiors from local administrators are transferred to these camps. According to the common testimony derived from statements of victims: Propaganda lessons of 14 to 15 hours a day (including memorizing Chinese songs of the Communist Party, - a great deal of Uyghurs are not fluent in Chinese or they know just a little - Watching videos of the Communist Party, learning Chinese, repeatedly writing texts on appreciation of the party and the Chinese president, etc.), extreme deprivation of food, deprivation of medical aid, intense torture and sexual violence are common characteristics of concentration camps. The conclusion we have drawn as a result of detailed interviews we have had with victims, relatives of victims and specialists is that the first examples of such camps were commissioned at limited number of places in Uyghur Autonomous Region in 2014, and 2015 and 2016 are the years when large-scale camps started to be built and, upon appointment of former Tibet governor to Uyghur Autonomous Region in 2016, widespread detentions of masses started in late 2016.



*A concentration camp near Hotan.
(Digitized the real photo.)*

5.1.3. Forced labor centers

Complexes that contain plants to which people selected from temporary surveillance centers and concentration camps are transferred. Although conditions vary depending on the center, conditions of the same forced labor center may differ based on personal assessment. Forced labor for 12 to 14 hours a day and deprivation of communication are common characteristics of all forced labor camps. Generally, those from 14 to 40 years of age are transferred to these camps. Those who stay on Saturdays, once a week, with their family, and have to return to the camp by Sunday evening are the "luckiest" ones among those staying at these camps. While some of them are allowed to stay with their families once a month, some slave workers are not allowed to get out at all.

5.1.4. Children's Camps

Centers where children younger than 14 years of age, whose first degree relatives have been detained due to mass detentions, are kept. Chinese officials do not generally allow other relatives to take care of these children who are in need of care for their first degree relatives are not free. Children of 0 to 14 years of age are intensely taught Chinese and Chinese culture at these camps. Their names in Uyghur Turkish and Kazakh Turkish are replaced with Chinese ones. It is forbidden for them to speak Uyghur Turkish and they are entirely deprived of their cultural heritage. Their relatives or their parents outside China, if any, are not able to find out about whereabouts of the children and how they are.

5.1.5. Prisons

Places that actually existed, yet are used in a manner in excess of their capacities since 2016 when mass detentions began. Again, propaganda and systematic torture at an unprecedented level are being implemented at prisons starting from 2016. Owners of confession texts individuals are tortured to sign at temporary detention centers or those transferred to concentration camps for they denied to sign such texts are, if they are deemed fit by the administration, transferred to prisons. Imprisonment sentences are mostly discovered with a police notice served to those kept at concentration camps in person, not at a court where means of defending oneself are available. Imprisonment times of 15 to 20 are so common for those younger than forty five years of age.

5.2. The First Concentration Camp Trials of the Postmodern Era

In 2014, cities of Uyghur Autonomous Region such as Kashgar, Hotan, Aksu with the highest Uyghur population saw an extraordinary activity. In 2013, committees intended to carry out retrospective examinations under the name of "re-assessment" had been established. Such committees had started examining Uyghur publications of the previous 15 years and issuance of reports had started. Professor İlham Tohti, a respected Uyghur academician, who is well-known across the country, was, in 2014, arrested in Beijing. Tohti was an academician making an effort to ensure that minority rights arising out of the Chinese Constitution are given to Uyghurs. Tohti who had a great influence over all students with any ethnic origin was sentenced to imprisonment for life.

Abdulhaber Recep who was engaged in trade in Uyghur Autonomous Region was detained in the city of Hotan in 2014 when the first versions of concentration camps were started running their operations. While what Recep told us is a lot different from pre-2014 prison testimonies, it overlaps post-2016 camp testimonies. What is told by those detained from 2014 to 2016 and released thanks to bribery who managed to flee the country supports what is told by Abdulhaber Recep. Abdulhaber tells that he was called by the police and he was asked to go to the police station, then he went there and he was surprised when he saw many men and women with their hands and feet in chains, standing and facing the wall, at the police station. Abdulhaber, too, joined those facing the wall in chains soon.⁷²

⁷²Interview conducted with Abdulhaber Recep on 06.04.2021.

Abdulhaber was transferred to Hotan district after his initial interrogation. He asked a police officer en route why they were not kept in Hotan and the police officer told him that prisons in Hotan were packed.⁷³

The place Abdulhaber Recep was taken, who was not aware that he was going to be one of the first victims of the first concentration camps of the post modern era, was actually a temporary detention center and designed according to the new system.⁷⁴

“We were 25 people staying in a room and we were trying to lie down side by side. Five to six people were, from time to time, unable to lie down since we did not fit in the floor. They were leaning against the wall and wait standing. There were actually no seats. They would teach us songs in Chinese and would beat us up if there was a single word you memorized wrongly. At the police station, there were handcuffs and shackles, yet they were not connected to one another. When we were transferred to the camp, they chained our hands and feet to one another. You cannot stand upright. At the beginning, there were couple of thieves in the ward, but they never chained them. Everyone who went to the police for we were called or taken from their homes were connected to one another. At the camp, 5 to 6 police officers with electrified batons would come to the ward every morning and ask questions such as, “what have you done, why are you here” and would beat up everyone for 15 to 20 minutes. It was impossible for us to defend ourselves for our hands were chained to our feet. We’d get up at 6 in the morning. There were cameras inside. There were police officers who constantly watched us from the glass partition above. It was for bidden for us to talk to one another. When police officers were away for lunch, we’d try to talk to one another, trying to hide from cameras. Someone’s phone had a Qoran video on his phone. Somebody has beard. There were so many people there just because their phones had photos showing women in traditional Uyghur headscarf. There were teachers to teach us Chinese songs. They were teaching Chinese in Uyghur Turkish and teaching us. Those fluent in Chinese would read and memorize in Chinese whereas they were teaching Chinese to the majority not fluent in Chinese by writing it in Uyghur Turkish. Teachers would write down songs on papers and hand them out to us. During lessons, they would look from the partition above together with police officers. They would call out our names in order and ask us to “recite”. Anyone not able to memorize would be beaten up so badly the next morning. The center where I was kept had 24 rooms. I had stayed in room numbered 3. Numbers were written on doors. I heard a dog bark from the ward opposite to ours when they first took me to the ward. Then, a man’s scream followed. I saw people with an age range of 14 to 70 years of age inside. The elderly were not able to withstand chains and they were crying. Toilets were inside the room with no barriers around them. Everyone would see anyone using the toilet, and the police officers were watching, too. People whose sentence became clear would be taken to the prison. I never saw anyone being taken to the court. They would come and read out sentences and, then, people would be transferred to the camp. They would give us bread, cooked on steam, at noon. They would also give a glass of hot water.

Six months later, I was transferred to Hotan. It was a lot worse in Hotan, it was a lot more packed. It was 25 of us in a room that was a lot smaller than the ward I stayed in when I was in Hotan. Half of us were leaning against the wall and the other half was on the floor. Our hands and feet were chained. There, too, was an education based on memorizing in Chinese. They would make us memorize songs and poems in Chinese. Once, a police officer in Hotan camp

⁷³ Interview conducted with Abdulhaber Recep on 06.04.2021.

⁷⁴ Interview conducted with Abdulhaber Recep on 06.04.2021.

asked: “Abdulhaber, why are you here?” and I replied, “I have not done anything.” Then, they started beating me with batons. I passed out, I do not remember anything. After I came round, my friends told me what happened. After I passed out, they pulled me out of the room. After this incident, a police officer said: “Why do you speak like this, you have been brought here for you’re guilty.” He told me that I should not say that I am not guilty in front of others, otherwise I would be a bad example for them, and that I should admit that I am guilty. I saw the camp building in Hotan as I left it. It was in the province center of Hotan and was a new building. I had passed by that building many times, yet I had no idea about what it was. Police officers with dogs would patrol around that building.

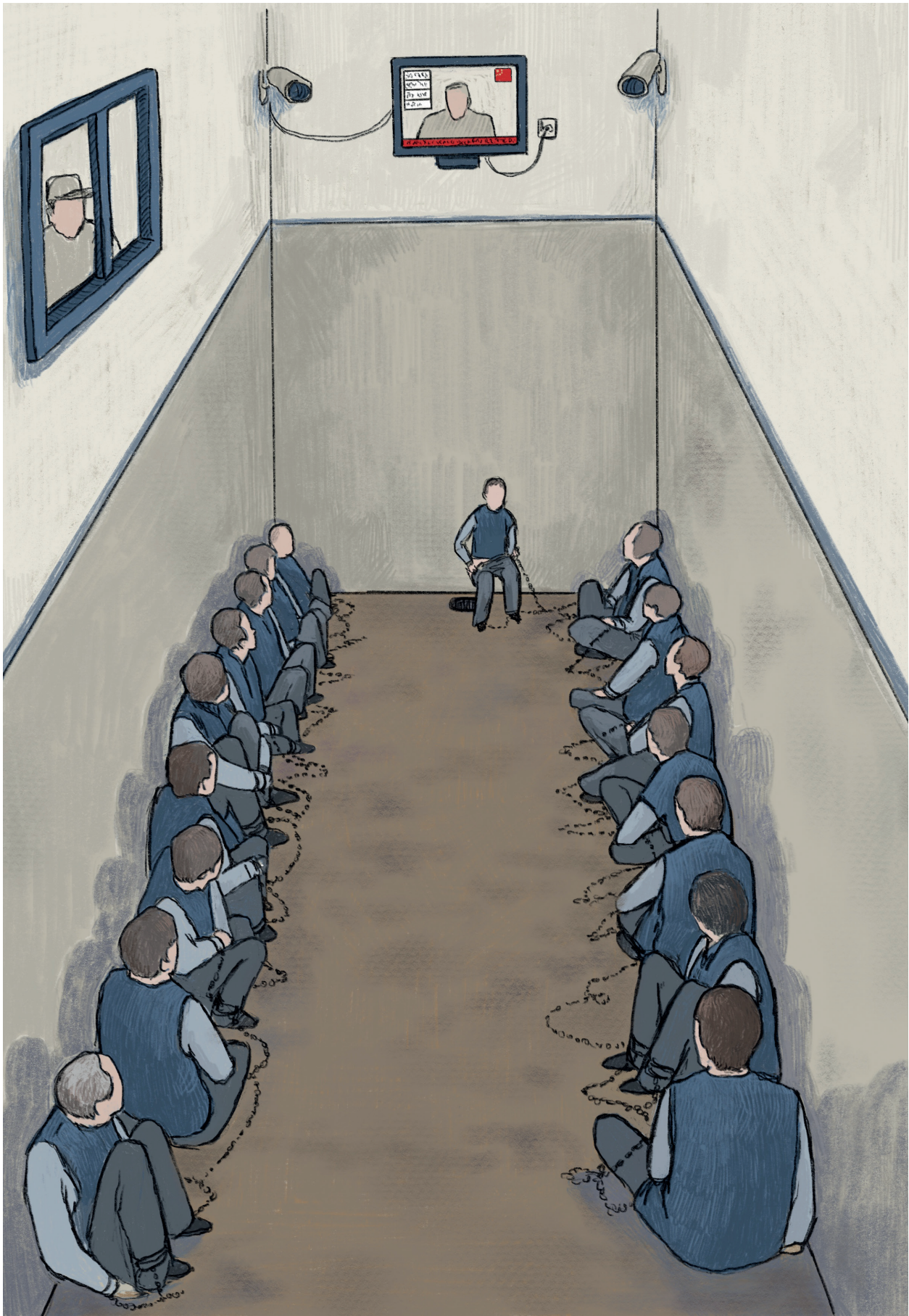
They would also beat up women a lot. I would hear women screaming. Based on sounds, I figured that they were using wires to beat them up. Women would weep a lot and we were hearing all of it. Every day, women’s cries and sounds generated when beating them up with batons would be mingled with one another.

There was this text composed of seventy items. Most of them were on religious rituals. It even mentioned hijab, beard, wearing the watch on right wrist. If someone is wearing her/his watch on right wrist and a Uyghur, that person can be taken to the camp.” Because Islam has traditions such as starting from the right hand side and eating with right hand. After I was released in November 2014, many people were arrested in 2015. I stayed inside for 9 months in total. They told me that I could be released if I admitted crimes on that document and sign it. They made me sign the document by telling me, “If you do not pay attention to these items, we have observers in the village among your neighbors and everywhere else. Or else we’ll bring you here back.””says Abdulhaber Recep on what he went through in the camp.⁷⁵

After Recep was able to be released after his friends bribed officials, he fled China with a passport he was able to get through a similar method He has not heard from his 7 children, 2 of which are officially registered, 5 of which have been concealed from the state since they are not in compliance with the quota for children and his wife since 2016. His eyes get wet when he is talking about them. He thinks that his children are being kept at children’s camps. He has heard some news that his wife who is a housewife has been sentenced to 9 years in prison.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Interview conducted with Abdulhaber Recep on 06.04.2021.

⁷⁶ Interview conducted with Abdulhaber Recep on 06.04.2021.



5.3. Commencement of Mass Detentions: 2016-2017

It was never easy to get a passport in Uyghur Autonomous Region. But, it became easy in 2015. All of a sudden, it became easy to get a passport which was previously really hard to get even if one paid a huge amount of bribe. And it did not stop there; local officials encouraged Uyghurs to get a passport by telling them that they could easily get a passport. Many Uyghurs wanted to take this opportunity. Reason for such unexpected ease was going to be understood in late 2016 when mass detentions started.

What is told by Şehide Ali of Kashgar confirms many witnesses: “Before 2015, passport was something very precious which could be hardly attained. My father had a really hard time in getting a passport for me although he had a very large network of people. After 2015, my uncles living in the village and even poor people were given passports, permit for traveling abroad and visas for any country they pleased. Many tourism companies were incorporated. Then, those who travelled through those companies and owners of those companies were, too, taken to camps along with everyone else.”⁷⁷

Most of the people detained were people who had a contact with countries included in China’s list of “objectionable” countries. USA, Kazakhstan, Turkey, Germany, Egypt, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, ... Mother-in-law of Gülzire Taşmemet was sentenced to 19 years in prison, November 2017, for she visited Turkey with a Chinese tourist group in 2016. Raziye Dilmurat, her cousin, was also sentenced to 11 years in prison based on the accusation that she had a contact with Germany. It was Gülzire Taşmemet herself who caused such contact. She had sent some medicines from Germany for her disease.⁷⁸

1 year after extensive passport distribution in 2015, those who had travelled out of the country and returned had started to be detained. Uyghur students who were studying outside China would be called by local police and encouraged to return to China. Abdurahman Satuk tells us that a friend of his called Yasin who was studying in Egypt in late 2016 returned to China due to such invitations, they never heard from him again, and his corpse was delivered to his family two months later.⁷⁹ Students who travelled abroad for higher education, businesspeople engaged in trade, those contacting their relatives outside China and, above all, families of all of these Uyghurs and Kazakhs became victims of a large-scale detention wave. Name bans that came into force in 2016 covered almost all names with an Islamic origin. There were many reasons for conviction that ranged from having a beard, using traditional Uyghur head scarf, to be assumed to be fasting to attending the mosque, keeping a Qoran in one’s house, having religious preaching cassettes -sold with permission of the state.

According to common testimonies of witnesses who lived in 2018 in cities such as Kashgar, Hotan, Aksu, Urumqi, Gulca, etc. and managed to flee China, it became a rare occasion to run into Uyghurs in streets. The said mass detention wave with a scale that is hard to believe was not only limited to those Uyghurs whose loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party was considered suspicious. Those who took care to be a compliant citizen for a lifetime and Uyghurs with a long and successful career as a civil servant who were members of the Chinese Communist Party were, now, target of the threat perception.

⁷⁷ Interview conducted with Şehide Ali on 27.03.2021.

⁷⁸ Interview conducted with Gülzire Taşmemet on 05.04.2021.

⁷⁹ Interview conducted with Abdurahman Satuk on 06.04.2021.

Father and mother aged over 70 of Halmurat Uygur living in Finland were both agnostic. His father had retired from Turfan Municipality whereas his mother had retired from Turfan Newspaper, the propaganda organ of the state. Halmurat says “We were a family deeply influenced by the communist ideology” while describing his family.⁸⁰ In 2017, his parents were both taken to camps.

What is told by Kazakh Melike Mahmud of Gulca, Uyghur Autonomous Region, confirms that such large-scale detention wave was too comprehensive to be compared to previous ones: “My uncle Dilşad Oralbay, my elder aunt Bahtıgöl Oralbay and my younger aunt Baila Oralbay had been taken to the camp. We were so surprised and could not believe it. Until then, we thought only pious ones were being arrested. We were wrong. They had not been to a mosque for once in their lives. My uncle was a civil servant who worked at the state newspaper of the Chinese government for 23 years. He was a member of the Communist Party. He was not a Muslim and did not even have some pious friends. So were my aunts. Then, we found out that my great uncle had stayed in the concentration camps, yet had been released for he got so sick. He had a paralysis”.⁸¹

Camp victims and their relatives, living in 11 different countries, we have interviewed told us reasons supporting one another as reason for arrests. The most common reasons are as follows: studying abroad (all of them studied at universities after obtaining official permission), having travelled to countries from list of objectionable countries including many neighboring countries of China and Western countries, being engaged in trade with such countries, having books, notably, Qoran, and voice-video records associated with the Islam religion in one’s phone, PC and house, having apps on one’s phone such WhatsApp, skype with a western origin, wearing a head scarf (for women, this includes traditional Uyghur women’s scarves that leave part of the hair exposed), having a relative living abroad, and having been reported as someone not supporting Chinese Communist Party, etc. (All of the foregoing were also factors that had an impact upon China’s official citizen scoring system).

The Chinese State had shifted to a new security concept and they had started considering not being a Chinese as a potential threat, although there is no rational explanation for this. Xu Guixiang, of Xinjiang Propaganda Bureau of the Chinese State told BBC on those taken to concentration camps: “We take someone on the verge of committing a crime and turn that person into a person complying with laws.”⁸² With this common discourse it prefers to announce to the world, China had admitted keeping millions of minority community members ranging from professors of reputable universities to housewives from small villages at camps by predicting that they will commit a crime before they actually do.

China prefers introducing concentration camps to the international public opinion as “Education Centers, Transformation Centers.” Although Uyghur academicians, artists, athletes, businesspeople who are at the top of their careers are being kept in these camps, China insists on the claim that those taken to camps are being given vocational training and necessary education.

⁸⁰ Interview conducted with Halmurat Uygur on 31.03.2021.

⁸¹ Interview conducted with Melike Mahmud on 06.04.2021.

⁸² BBC News. Inside China’s ‘thought transformation’ camps. (2019). Youtube: Accessed on May 21, 2021.

There are more than 11 million of Uyghurs living in Uyghur Autonomous Region, if we accept official data of China. Given the widespread existence of unregistered children, it may be assumed that such figure may be more than the official figure.

Xinjiang Newspaper, the propaganda organ of Chinese State, covered a news story that, from 2016 to 2019, 4 million 719 thousand 600 people were given vocational training in the region on the issue dated October 31, 2020. We know that they continued to build new camps in 2017, 2018 and 2019. Some sources point out that total number of new camps built is 380 as of 2020.⁸³ Despite of such increase in capacity, after 2018 releases with probation started to create room for new detentions. Based on the calculation made by ignoring such capacity increase for it has not been detailed yet, when number of people taken to education, as reported by the state, from 2016 to 2019 is simulated to after 2019, it may be estimated that 2 million 359 thousand people were taken to camps from 2019 to June 2021. In this case, it is likely that 7 million 78 thousand people including those released from 2016 until now (June 2021) with probation, those transferred to the prison and to force labor centers have been taken to camps. We estimate that the number of people staying at camps at the same time can be over 3 million where there is a constant circulation of people.

⁸³ The Guardian. China has built 380 internment camps in Xinjiang, study finds((2020). Accessed on May 29, 2021.

5.4. Physical Conditions of Concentration Camps

Based on testimonies of witnesses, we understand that Temporary Surveillance Centers, Concentration Camps described by China as “Education Camp” and Prisons are similar to one another in terms of conditions. Testimonies of victims kept at these three types of centers and those who were there contain consistent and similar narratives. At those camps established for forced labor, it is understood that suitable conditions are available for providing necessary medical aid, at a minimum level, though. We have very limited information on children’s camps. Apart from short videos posted by Chinese officials on social media for propaganda purposes, we do not have any documents to detail physical condition of children yet. Since we’re to address forced labor camps and children’s camps in a different part, we’ll detail conditions, which are mostly common, of Temporary Surveillance Centers, Concentration Camps and Prisons in this part.

The first camp space every victim encounter is the interrogation rooms. Before being taken to such camps, they are chained on hand and feet upon the first entry into the camp. Interrogation rooms are being watched with cameras most of the time, and interrogation rooms are those rooms without camera, described by victims as “black” rooms, where sexual assaults on women take place, and there is a bed in these rooms. There are witnesses pointing out that some male victims, too, have suffered from sexual assault. At the interrogation room, the person to be interrogated sits at a seat called “tiger chair”. The tiger chair is well-known torture instrument in China in which hands and feet of the person sitting on it are fixed and it is impossible to move. It makes sure that the convict is unable to do anything to defend herself/himself during torture.

At interrogation rooms, methods of torture commonly implemented include beating, being exposed to powerful light, electrification with electrified baton, pushing a needle between nail and flesh, denailing, placing metals similar to hooks on sexual organs, hanging on chains for a prolonged time, beating with chains and wires, rape, deprivation of food-water-sleep. Threatening with family members outside, if any, are quite common.

Blue-gray clothes and traditional Chinese shoes made of thin fabric are put on them instead of their own clothes that are torn apart during the first interrogation. It is common to buzz cut women and men’s hair. How long interrogation of a convict will take depends on her/his ability to satisfy what is requested. For instance, those admitting all accusations attributed, testifying that many other people are guilty and admitting these quickly are, mostly, sent to prisons with long terms of imprisonment or to so-called educations at camps. Interrogation of those estimating gravity of results for admitting, therefore, takes a long time. There are some victims telling that intense interrogation tortures last for 6 months.

Ömerbek Ali, one of the camp victims we have interviewed, went through things similar to told by other victims: “At the end of 1 hour, reactions got more violent since I did not accept slanders, and they started using electrified sticks. I was able to withstand electrified sticks, then they shifted to rubber sticks. I was sitting in the tiger chair, they were beating me when I was on it. Then, they lifted me up from the chair and tied me to the ceiling, then they carried on beating me. After a while, they were torturing with instruments to cause pain on sexual organs and sensitive limbs. Then, they carried on torture by pushing thin metal rods between nail and flesh. They did not ask anything else. “You have committed a crime, you’ll admit that you are guilty,” and then they carried on the torture. They would insult while torturing. Did you think that you are privileged for you have a Kazakhstan passport? It does not matter even

if you have a US passport” said they. They were almost having fun when torturing me. You would doubt if they were human beings if you saw them. They would torture me for a few hours during such interrogation process, then they would take a break and go to lunch and smoke, afterwards they would come back and carry on the torture. They tortured me a lot for me to admit accusations, yet I said: “you may kill me if you want, but I will never admit” I was in tourism business and I was being accused of taking people to Western countries. I had taken them by legal means. How could that be a crime? The interrogation lasted for four days in this fashion. They would give us half liter water and a piece of small bread. But, I was not even able to eat that bread. I was eager to drink water for I was beaten up a lot but I did not have strength to drink it most of the time. The torture lasted for four days, round the clock.

I was either chained to walls or sitting on the tiger chair or hanged in the air. Then, I heard a girl from the adjacent cell screaming. I heard that she was begging “Kill me!” in Uyghur Turkish and I felt so sad. (He cries)



My whole body was like rotten meat. There was not even a single spot over my body that did not have a torture scar. It was painful for me to walk because of the pain under my soles. Those chains attached to my feet really made feel offended. There were iron bars to the side of places where we were lying down at camps and we were chained to them at all times, they had chained us like animals. I felt awfully resentful for not being seen as a human and being ill-treated.”⁸⁴

“There was this Uyghur young fellow called Abdusselam, they took him. He returned from the torture with both arms in paralysis. They appointed me as the restroom assistant for that boy. When I asked him “what happened to your arms?”, he said, “they hanged me from my arms to the ceiling, my feet were not touching the ground. When they lowered me four days later, my arms were like this.” When I brought down his pants, his body was all black and rotten. he was 30 years old.” says Baktiali Nur with Kazakh origin, whom we interviewed for his testimony.⁸⁵

Wards at camps generally had high ceilings and are 3 meters by 6 meters, 18 sqm. They are being watched with cameras. There are also loud speakers so that police officers can give instructions when they wanted. Toilets are inside the room with no barriers around them. There is no water in the ward including the toilet. Skin diseases are so common due to open and waterless toilets and no or little chance of taking a shower for convicts. There may be 18 to 25 convicts in a 18 sqm ward. Number of convicts go up as rooms get larger. The common narrative of victims telling that they stayed in rooms of 18, 25, 30, 50, 60 persons is that it is impossible for everyone to lie down at the same time. They tell that they would postpone visits to the toilets for as long as they can so that their places for lying down would not be occupied by someone else. This means that people sleep in turns. Victims mention two-hour lying down cycles. They also point out that those with no place to lie down try to rest by leaning against walls. Wards have a concrete floor. There is no material that could be used as mattress.

Victims tell that they were given, as food, a glass of water (some statements mention hot water), some type of small Chinese bread cooked with steam, cabbage and eggplant juice throughout the day. Such extremely malnutrition leads to extreme weight loss and health problems when coupled with bad conditions. Ömerbek Ali who stayed at camps for 8 months says that he weighed 115 kg when entering the camp and left weighing 60 kg.⁸⁶

It is observed that serious health problems are common at camps due to grave physical conditions and tortures and there is almost no medical support at camps. Victims mention many people such as a person whose intestine came out of his body by more than hand span due to hemorrhoids, a person urinating blood because of his kidneys damaged during torture, a person not receiving any type of medical intervention despite of fainting and lying on the ground for 2 to 3 hours, a person whose legs got broken and lost his ability to walk due to lack of medical intervention, and a person with a broken hip who became disabled due to lack of medical intervention.

We know that even those victims who stayed at camps for short periods, i.e. 8 to 9 months, suffer from permanent health problems. Cardiac, renal, digestive, orthopedic and psychiatric disorders are the most common ones. Especially women suffer from some permanent damages in reproductive system and rectum - large intestine because of the systematic

⁸⁴ Interview conducted with Ömerbek Ali on 24.03.2021.

⁸⁵ Interview conducted with Baktiali Nur on 24.03.2021.

⁸⁶ Interview conducted with Ömerbek Ali on 24.03.2021.

sexual assault. There are also statements of male victims who lost their sexual health. All relatives of victims tell that their relatives who managed to get out of camps look very old, unhealthy and weak at pictures and videos of them they were able to see. It seems that many victims who were healthy and capable of walking before they were taken to camps are in need of someone else's help to live upon their release. It is quite common to use a wheelchair or cane after getting out of the camp.

What happened to Kaliyolla Tursun, over 70, a Kazakh who is a member of the Chinese Communist Party and a retired civil servant, is only one of the many examples for gravity of physical conditions. According to what Akikat, his son, was able to learn from some victims who stayed at the same camp as his father and from a teacher and his relatives who visited his father twice, Kaliyolla was taken to the camp due to two petitions he wrote to Beijing. He could not a request by the wife of Cuma Ağay who was taken to the camp and whose corpse was delivered to his family after a while and had penned two petitions to Beijing, asking about what happened to him and mass detentions he was unable to understand. He was detained four days after he sent those petitions. His wife and children were also being interrogated in rooms adjacent to the one where he was being interrogated. They were able to hear cries of Kaliyolla during the torture. His family was released after being kept at camps for a while. They went to see Kaliyolla with a permit that was so hard to obtain. His hand and feet were chained and, additionally, his feet and hands were tied to one another. He looked very sick and exhausted. There were two police officers standing by him and it was forbidden for them to hug and cry. In the second visit, Kaliyolla did not have chains in his hands and feet. To put it more correctly, the police did not think that it was necessary anymore Kaliyolla was paralyzed and he was unconscious. His family was forced to shoot a propaganda video so that their son outside China would stop his posts through the social media. They were taken to the camp once again since they turned it down. Akikat, son of Kaliyolla, found that his father was dead a long time after his death. He only found out about his death and that his corpse had not been delivered to his relatives, not how and exactly when.⁸⁷

All witnesses mention that blood samples taken twice a month, at women's and men's camps, through arms stretched out from door window and pills they were forced to swallow.

It is not entirely wrong for China to define those camps as "education centers." At the Temporary Surveillance Centers and, notably, concentration camps, there is an education lasting for up to 14 to 15 hours a day. Yet in an unprecedented manner.

Kalbinur Sedik, with Uzbek origin, who was forced to teach Chinese at a concentration camp, described the education given and conditions in following words during the interview: "It is a four-storey building. There is an electronic scanning device, and there are high iron bars and fences on walls. You would pass through double iron gates through which you can enter with finger print. The education was in a large room.

There were no tables and chairs. There were metal stools on which only children can sit. While trying to teach Chinese writings on the board, I would hear people cry behind me. When I turned around and looked, I would see teardrops of the elderly dropping from their beards to the floor. most of them were 60 to 70 years old. There were 7 women. Three of them were in 70s' and others in their 60s. Number of people brought to the camp increased after March 2017. There were seven to eight thousand people in the camp. People had numbers on them. I was teaching from morning till night. I would go home in the company of police once classes were over. It was forbidden for me to use my phone during the day.

⁸⁷ Interview conducted with Akikat Kaliyolla on 25.04.2021.



They would make people memorize songs such as “We’d not if it weren’t for the Chinese Communist Party.” Since most members of the first group I taught were old theologians, they were not fluent in Chinese at all. Most of the subsequent large groups arriving at the camp were students who studied abroad. Therefore, they were fluent in Chinese. For instance, most of the students who studied in Turkey and returned were in my camp. There were many students who studied in the USA and Egypt. Those travelling to countries considered objectionable were also being taken to camps. There were countless people who were taken to camps for they had photos showing their travel to those countries. I have become aware of these as a result of chats with police officers.

I was not able to communicate with residents of the camp except for the education. It was forbidden for us to communicate with them in Uyghur Turkish. I know that one of them was the imam of the mosque nearby my house in Urumqi. For a brief moment, he told me: “I have five children, tell my children that I am here and alive.” He asked me to tell this and I did not answer that man. A few days later, the man disappeared. After that imam, a young fellow could not help telling me, when I left at noon: “I have a greengrocer, nearby your place, in Urumqi. I have a wife there. She is about to give birth. Tell her that I am here and alive.” Then, that boy, too, disappeared. Families cannot hear from those brought to camps. The father is not aware of his children’s whereabouts and children are not aware of their father’s whereabouts, nobody knows. If someone’s husband is taken and the wife goes to the police station and asks “where is my husband?”, it turns out that they would threaten her, saying “if you ask again, we’ll take you there, too.” I was unable to speak in any way when they took me there. The papers I was forced to sign before starting teaching at the camp had items that prohibit us from telling anything to others about the place where we teach. They had threatened me, saying that they would take my relatives to the camp if I did. Therefore, I did not tell anything to anyone. But, I witnessed others talking about the camp. Police officers would sometimes give me a ride to the bus stop when I was going to go home. I would be able to catch the bus at times. When I was not able to catch it, I would get in any Uyghur’s car passing by. One of them told me: “I had opened an office selling flight tickets for my son.” His son apparently sold someone two tickets for a plane bound for Turkey. Then he was taken to the camp based on such reason. They took his son to the camp by accusing him of “aiding and abetting terrorists”. The man went to all police stations, in tears, and looked for his son.

For 6 months I taught, people could not take a shower in any way. They only had one minute to use the toilet. Hair of both men and women were buzz cut.

We would constantly teach them communist songs in Chinese. Convicts would sit in their cells facing towards the wall at times after classes. During the class, police officers would storm in and read names of 5 to 6 persons and take them away. There was an interrogation room under the classroom. We would hear their voices, and there were screams all the time. Those tortured were unable to come to the class for a whole month. They were being subjected to grave tortures. I asked a police officer, ‘how are you torturing them?’ They would make them sit in an electrified chair: tiger chair. He mentioned an apparatus placed over the head which gives electricity. He described a method of torture similar to a pair of gloves which burns hands. There was a man who used to own a plant. I think that he thought he could be quickly released if he learnt Chinese and Communist songs. He was working really hard, they took him to the interrogation, and he never returned. When we asked what had happened to him, they told that he had had a cardiac condition and died. They would say the same thing at all times for those people who never returned from interrogation. There were so many people who never returned. I personally saw the corpse of two persons who never returned. Everyone

at the camp would be allowed to go to the toilet for three times a day for one minute. They would torture anyone not leaving the toilet at the end of the one minute and most of them would have prostate disorder.

I had been to the camp shortly after it was established. I knew how some people looked at the beginning and I was able to see how they changed. They lie down on the floor. No seats. They must sit on the floor and face towards the wall. They see no sunlight. It was a dark place. Most of the elderly looked healthy upon their arrival and they were not able to stand up and sit over the time. All of their faces looked sick. They were in a very bad shape. People were getting more and more unconscious. They were merely looking. We were doing the class merely for the sake of doing the class. I was unable to communicate with them in any way. A few persons who asked me to inform their families that they were alive, at the beginning, were among those who were taken to interrogation and never returned. Therefore, nobody was able to speak. When I was unable to see some familiar faces, I would ask the police officers about them: they would say “We sent them to labor” or “they were sick and died.” I heard that a few of them were used for halal organ and a few of them were sent to the forced labor.”⁸⁸

The fact that there were the elderly among those taken to camps is a factor that increased the death toll. Corpses of those persons who are reported as dead are not delivered to their relatives if they are outside. Witnesses believe that this is a measure taken by officials against the likelihood of identifying traces of torture on dead bodies. Professor Abidin Ayup, 90, a well-respected religious scholar, who had retired from Xinjiang Islam Institute a long time ago is one of the oldest person known to be kept at camps. Şemsiye Ali whom we have met confirms that many members of Ayup’s family including her aunt (Asiye Memed, daughter-in-law of Abidin Ayup) are being kept at camps and they are not able to hear from them.⁸⁹

It is estimated that Professor Abidin Ayup is being kept at Tumushuke Prison along with many other respected Uyghur religious scholars.

Kalbinur Sedik who taught Chinese at camps also shared her observations regarding elderly religious scholars: “Upon entering the room where I was going to teach, I saw theologists with handcuffs and shackles on their hands and feet and tied to one another and I was so surprised to see them there. While trying to teach Chinese writings on the board, I would hear people cry behind me. When I turned around and looked, I would see these elderly religious scholars cry. Their miserable looks would really kill me. They were all old. I could never forget them crying in handcuffs and shackles.”⁹⁰ (She cries)

Baktiali, the taxi driver, who stayed in camps about a year, described the education taken by them and conditions thereat : “They took me to the Chinese doctor there when I had a high fever. It was certain that I had a high fever based on measurement by thermometer, yet the doctor said, “this guy is lying, beat him up so that he tells the truth.” Then, police officers beat me up so badly. They beat me up with batons. After being beaten up, they took me back to the education site. Although I was sick, beaten up, they took me there, put me between two persons. I had fractures on my wrists when I was beaten there. After leaving camps, I was diagnosed with 9 different diseases; my kidneys, lungs, heart, stomach, etc.

⁸⁸ Interview conducted with Kalbinur Sedik on 24.03.2021.

⁸⁹ Interview conducted with Şemsiye Ali on 07.04.2021.

⁹⁰ Interview conducted with Kalbinur Sedik on 24.03.2021.

After I was beaten up, my hands and feet had swollen. I was about to faint. Although I was in such a bad condition, they would take me and make me sit down every single day. I was trying to sing songs, yet I had no energy to sing and memorize anything. The young fellow in front of me passed out and fell. He was motionless. They sent for the Chinese doctor. That Chinese doctor said, “this one, too, is faking.” That young fellow lied motionless for several hours, yet nobody intervened. Another doctor came from outside the camp and after examining him, they said, “he probably had cerebral hemorrhage.” Then, that young man was taken away. We never saw him again. He was 36 years old. His name was Ablimit. He was from Qapqal district.

I saw another youngster. I do not know his name, who was also a Uyghur. That youngster was taken to the hospital from the concentration camp. When he came back, we realized that his chest had been opened and stitched. That boy passed away the next day. He was, too, from Qapqal district, village Mazar.”⁹¹

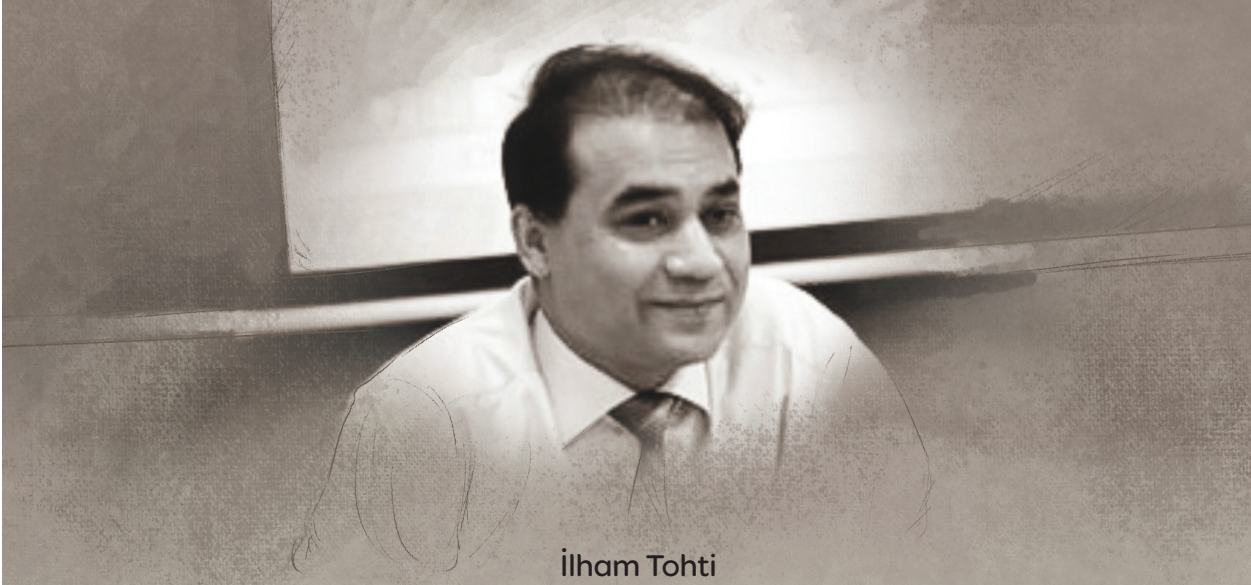
What we heard from Tabishan Marubkan, a camp victim, from Ciminey district of Altai province, matches with other camp victims told us: “Most of the people were suffering from mental disorders. Some were speechless and some had terrible headaches. They were hitting their heads to walls for they had a terrible headache. We were keeping them so that they would not hit their heads. There was a room called room for thoughts on the ground floor. They would torture people, too. There were no protective sponges on walls. If someone is to hit his head to the wall, you have to stop him straightaway. Everyone was in charge of someone else and watching him over so that nobody commits suicide. If there are six people in a room, four people would sleep and the other two would be on guard duty. This was the order in place so that nobody commits suicide because everyone thought of suicide as a way out.”⁹²

Baktiali Nur uses similar expressions, too: “I was in a psychological and physical torture every single day. Even on days of no torture, I would have pain and swelling all over my body for I had to sit on a metal stool for 15 to 16 hours. We were always hungry and thirsty. We would be able to sleep for only four hours. Death was always in my mind and prayers. I was thinking that death was an escape. Death was the thing I wanted the most.”⁹³

⁹¹ Interview conducted with Baktiali Nur on 10.04.2021.

⁹² Interview conducted with Tabishan Marubkan on 15.04.2021.

⁹³ Interview conducted with Baktiali Nur on 10.04.2021.



İlham Tohti

Well-known Uyghur academician and economist. Tohti, a professor at Minzu University, Beijing, was one of the most respected opinion leaders of the Uyghur people. Tohti was both a remarkable academician in his field and had a good command of English, Japanese, Urdu, Korean and Russian apart from Chinese and was able to speak several Turk dialects other than Uyghur Turkish, who is familiar with the world and is a world renowned intellectual. Professor Tohti, especially since mid-2000s, focused on his works about how problems of the Uyghur, his own people in the lap of which “he was raised”, in his words, could be solved.

He had friendships with Chinese intellectuals and contacts with Chinese officials with whom he, from time to time, shared his suggestions for solution. Tohti was getting attention with his attitude prioritizing the dialogue for solution of problems. Tohti who says, “It is my historical responsibility to ensure that Uyghurs and the Han Chinese proceed hand in hand in Uyghur Region.... The Uyghur problem will be solved on the basis of dialogues of Uyghurs and the Chinese.”⁹⁴ was being criticized by some Uyghur elites outside China due to his stance prioritizing territorial integrity of China and introducing the dialogue as the solution for the problem. However, Professor Tohti always remained a figure who was always respected by those supporting and criticizing him as well as the Chinese and Western intellectuals.

Tohti believed that his people’s underdevelopment, restriction of the most fundamental humanitarian freedoms and massacres they suffered from at certain intervals can only be solved if minority rights under the nation’s constitution are “really” granted, which can only be possible if Beijing is persuaded. “Instead of punishing millions saying that the “king is naked”, would not clothing the king help our country to save on money greatly?” said Professor İlham Tohti.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ İlham Tohti. (2015). Hapisteki Lider İlham Tohti Yolum ve Gayem: Uyğur Türkleri ve Çin Meselesi. Şira Publications. September 2015. Compiled by Hamit Göktürk.

⁹⁵ İlham Tohti. (2009). Interview at Peking University of Nations. October 29, 2009.

What Tohti told and his style were groundbreaking.“ There two kinds of China in this country: One belonging to the community and the other belonging to the state. I love China belonging to the community. I tie my expectations and hope to China belonging to the community. Therefore, I am trying to reinforce the friendship between Uyghurs and the Chinese.”⁹⁶ said he. He was a figure, with such rhetoric and style, who cannot be possibly terrorized by the Chinese state.

Tohti, shortly before he was detained, had explained his efforts and the extent of the intense repression of state on him as follows: “Freedom for the Uyghur passes through the Chinese people’s understanding us. It is very hard for us to become free by any other means. Therefore, I tried to explain problem of Uyghurs to the Chinese society, administration... I called out to the conscience of the Chinese. I wanted to solve the problem by means of dialogue and I acted with good faith. But, public authorities have a bad faith. I feel that they are willing to wipe me out”.⁹⁷

Professor İlham Tohti was, in February 2013, detained in Beijing Airport, along with daughter, as they were about to travel abroad. Authorities allowed Cevher İlham, her daughter, to leave the country, but did not allow Tohti to do so. He was detained at his home in January 2014. It was explained that he was sentenced to imprisonment for life, in September 2014, with the accusation of provoking separatism and hatred.

İlham Tohti gave a message on what Chinese authorities might be capable of doing to this people in one of his last articles before his arrest: “Let my people do not believe that I have committed a suicide in the jail. I do not commit a suicide.”⁹⁸

2014 is the first year when China commissioned early trial versions of concentration camps in Uyghur Autonomous Region. Denying Tohti permission to travel abroad in 2013 and sentencing him to imprisonment for life in 2014 appear to be one of several incidents that make one think that China was contemplating about the project of Sinicization at concentration camps that serve irrational securitization and radical purposes since 2013.

⁹⁶ İlham Tohti. (2013). Voice of America Radio: Interview of Dung Fang, a Reporter of the Chinese Television. November 7, 2013.

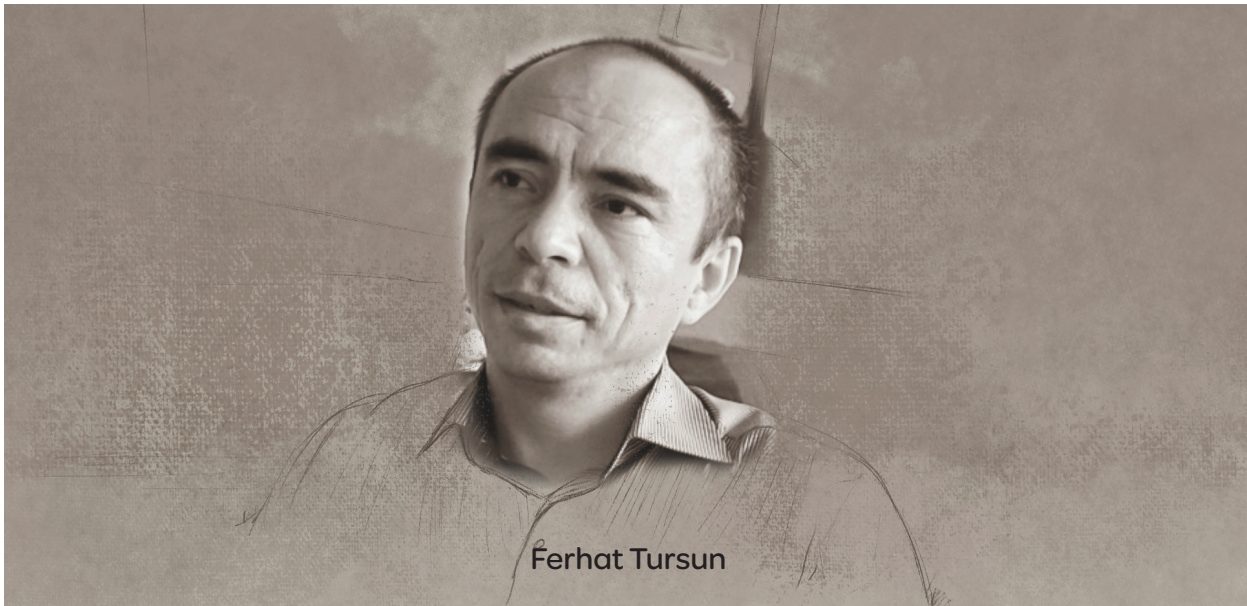
⁹⁷ İlham Tohti. (2014). Interview with Radio Free Asia. RFA Uyghur Channel. January 31, 2014

⁹⁸ İlham Tohti. (2014). Interview with Radio Free Asia. RFA Uyghur Channel. January 31, 2014



Yalkun Rozi

Yalkun Rozi, famous Uyghur literary critic, publisher, editor and author. Rozi who was an official of state-owned Xinjiang Education Publications was considered an authority when it comes to the Uyghur literature. He was detained in October 2016. It was explained, in 2018, that he was sentenced to imprisonment for 15 years.



Ferhat Tursun

Poet and novelist. he had drawn attention of the literary community with his first novel published in 1999. The intense influence of Freud, Schopenhaur in his works and his philosophical analyses were brand new for the Uyghur literary community. It was found odd and criticized just like any other new. He was harshly criticized by Yalkun Rozi, one of the important figures of the Uyghur literature in particular. Quite liberal style of Tursun had disturbed many others. Some even called him Salman Rushdie of China. People talked a lot about their polemics of the two that started off in a literary fashion and then turned into a heated debate.

In an interview he gave to Foreign Policy in October 2015, Ferhat Tursun said: "Religion is a very good thing, just like literature, like a poem, it is very nice. But, some people make the religion too scary."

He was detained in January 2018. News was received, in 2019, that he was sentenced to imprisonment for 16 years, yet such news was not confirmed.

He and Yalkun Rozi, his biggest objector, had two things in common: they were both men of letters and Uyghurs. The reason why they were sentenced to similar imprisonments was only one of their common points: Being Uyghur.



Abdülkadir Celaleddin

Well-known Uyghur poet and academician. Celaleddin was a literature professor at Xinjiang University. Like many Uyghur academicians, he was a member of the Chinese Communist Party. In January 29, 2018, he was detained in his house by placing a black bag on his head. Officials announced that he was taken to “re-education” camp. Nobody has heard from him since he was taken.⁹⁹ A poem which is thought to have been written/told by Celaleddin at the camp and has been shared with the public thanks to release of some victims who stayed with him gets attention as the first literary product of concentration camps:

Yanarım yok (I have no road)

Bir bulurda yegânimen, nigârım yok,
Kiçiliri kara bastı, tumârım yok,
Bu hayattın özge yeme humârım yok,
Cimcîlikta hıyâl ezdi, amâlım yok.

(I am alone in a corner and have no lover,
Nights are all dark and I have no talisman,
I have no wish left from this life,
Dreams crushed me in the silence, I have no relief.)

Men kim idim, nime boldum, bilelmidim,
Kimgе deymen dil sözümni, diyelmidim,
Yâ pelekniñ huy peylini sizelmidim,
Yar kışınge baray deymen, karârım yok.

(I have no idea who I was and what became of me?,
To whom shall I tell words of my heart, I couldn't tell,
Maybe, I could not predict what the destiny planned for me,
I wish to reach out my lover, I have no judgment.)

Pesillerni bilip turdum burceklerdin,
Hiçbir hever alalmidim çiçeklerdin,
Bu sığınışler ötüp ketti süneklerdin,
Kandak yer bu, karârım bar, yanarım yok.

(I have noticed seasons through cracks,
I have not heard from flowers,
This longing has passed through bones,
What sort of a place is this, I have judgment, I have no road.)

(Poem: Abdulkadir Celaleddin / Translated into Turkey Turkish: Prof. Dr. Ahmet Bican Ercilasun)

⁹⁹ Interview conducted with Babür Celaleddin on 07.04. 2021.

5.5. Women in Camps

What Gülbahar Celilova, who stayed in camps for more than one year, and Kalbinur Sedik, who stayed 6 months in camps as an officially appointed Chinese teacher, told us sound like scenes from a horror movie.¹⁰⁰⁻¹⁰¹ What we heard from Gülbahar and Kalbinur who experienced camps in different cities and at different times in details match with testimonies of the other women and limited testimonies of male victims related to women.

We know that they keep women of 14 to 80 years of age at camps. For women transferred to camps following the initial detention and interrogation, the first procedure different from men is checking whether or not they are pregnant based on their blood and urine tests. Regardless of the phase of pregnancy they are in, pregnancy of those women found out to be pregnant is terminated. It was known that 24-year-old Zeynep Abdürreşit, taken to camps for she studied at renowned Al Azhar University of Egypt, was pregnant for 2 months 'for she had a test before she was taken to the camp and she had all known symptoms of pregnancy. Long after she was taken to the camp, official authorities notified her family that she was not pregnant. (With intense diplomatic efforts of the country where her husband was).¹⁰² Abortion is not a human rights violation limited to camps in Uyghur Autonomous Region. The Chinese administration has a long history of abortion policy that is being implemented strictly for a very long time. It is known that women from Uyghur Autonomous Region commonly hide and have to remain in a house arrest by not going out of the house during their pregnancies exceeding their child quota. However, there are countless witness testimonies indicating that authorities are trying to detect such pregnancies with unnoticed house visits as well as routine controls. When such pregnancies are detected, mandatory abortion is performed under supervision of the police and permanent sterilization is performed during the same operation. According to what victims told us, forced interventions on the woman body are not limited to what has been covered in the foregoing. Another impact is that the women at camps do not have periods, which is believed to be induced by regular pills administered.

What is also told that an injection administered to lactating mothers brought to camps ensure that they no longer produce breast milk. Since toilets are open (which is nothing but a hole in a corner of the ward), existence of police officers constantly watching them through cameras and glass partitions as well as existence of other women in the ward seem to be a problem. All police officers of women's camps are male officers (there may be two female Chinese officers at times). There are no Uyghur police officers at women's camps although there are Uyghur officers, in a smaller number, though, apart from Chinese officers are men's camps.

There are female police officers at Temporary Surveillance Centers and prisons, even a little. There is a special reason for unusual intensity of male officers. Kalbinur Sedik, who worked as a teacher at a women's concentration camp of 8 to 10 thousand people, tells us: "On the first day I went to the women's camp, I saw a 18 to 20-year-old young girl being carried on a stretcher. At that moment, when I saw a police officer I used to know, we whispered and said "let's meet in the afternoon." The police officer told me that injections and pills would be administered to women kept there for the purpose of sterilization and experimental

¹⁰⁰ Interview conducted with Gülbahar Celilova on 26.04.2021.

¹⁰¹ Interview conducted with Kalbinur Sedik on 26.03.2021.

¹⁰² Interview conducted with Almas Nizameddin on 26.03.2021.

studies against various diseases. So, that poor girl on the stretcher had an adverse impact. Her menstruation did not stop for a month and a half. That poor girl died because of loss of blood. All police officers were ethnic Han Chinese. They were actually too eager to work there. Because they were able to rape women any time they like and in any way they like. I would hear them talking about how they tortured their anus, sexual organs, mouths, ears with electrified batons at all times. Uyghur police officers from outside of the camp would, from time to time, come. They would ask the women being taken to the interrogation through windows where food was served inside camps: “do they rape you?” They were unable to reply and would start weeping. It turns out that the Chinese police would talk about these whenever they gather and drink booze. This would be heard and even discovered by superior police officers. So, superior police officers would send Uyghur police officers to inquire and find out what is happening, thinking that it would be bad if these incidents were discovered by others. Male Uyghur police officers were working at men’s camps, too. It was so surprising to find out that all police officers at the camp where they kept women were all Chinese.”¹⁰³

Abdullah Rasul tells us that his 72-year-old aunt named Risalet was taken to the camp, shortly after that, her corpse was delivered to her family in company of police officers and his cousin personally saw several torture scars over her body and his cousin told him about these after she went out of China.¹⁰⁴

Gülbahar describes the first things she saw in the women’s camp by saying: “They made me pass through gate 704. Many women were lying side by side crowdedly inside a small room. Young girls were waiting in a place like a small hall for not everyone was lying because of scarcity of space. When I stepped inside, women’s hair was too messy and they did not have hair bands. They all looked miserable. I started weeping, thinking to myself “what kind of a place is this they brought me to, I am not guilty.” A woman approached to me, “Do not cry, we’re not guilty either, they’ll give you a longer sentence if you cry.”

It was 40 of us in a room. There were people with an age range of 14 to 80 years of age. Everyone had chain handcuffs and shackles on their hands and feet, and there were chains between hands and feet. Two feet and one hand were chained. The room was 5 meters long and about 3 meters wide, with a height of around 5 to 6 meters. There was an empty space of one meter like a hall on which we could walk to the toilet. The toilet was inside the room with no door. All of our body was visible when using the toilet, especially young girls were felling so ashamed. They would allow us to take a shower with cold water for one minute once a month. (Existence of permission varies from camp to camp) There was no soap. We’re not able to wash our hands even after using the toilet. This went on like this for around one month. Then, we had wounds all over our bodies and we had lice. They buzz cut our hair when they found lice on our hair and clothes.

They would give us a small piece of bread cooked on steam and cold soup prepared by mixing flour with cold water. At noon, they would give us only bread, yet it was so hard, and we would see mould inside them when we broke the bread. They would give us cabbage juice and we would consider ourselves lucky if we got cabbage inside it.

¹⁰³ Interview conducted with Kalbinur Sedik on 26.03.2021.

¹⁰⁴ Interview conducted with Abdullah Rasul on 06.04.2021.

In the first three months, they would change rooms once a week so that we would not find out about each other's situation. They would always call some people from rooms, but we were not being told where they were taking them. I was seeing people dying because of torture, who never return and are killed with injection. Some would come back with their finger nails removed. Some would have needles pushed between nail and flesh. I also saw people losing their mind.

When elderly women passed out, we would lie them in the empty walking hall, and doctors would come and apply something on their faces. If they did not come round within two to three hours, they would take them away, pulling them on the floor. We would think that they were dead. There was a 27-year-old young girl called Hürriyet. They took Hürriyet to interrogation, she was exposed to some grave tortures, when they brought her back, she had lost her mind and was constantly shouting. Since she would not stop shouting, they placed a black bag on her head in the midnight and took her to the black room (the one with no camera and with a bed in it). When they took me to the doctor one week later for my cardiac disease,¹⁰⁵ I saw corpse of Hürriyet being carried on a stretcher. We had stayed with Hürriyet for only one week. She had been brought to the camp for she had travelled to Turkey with her seven-year-old daughter.

They would give us pills twice a month. Besides, they would administer an injection every ten days through the small window at the door and take our blood samples. Girls had stopped having period due to pills administered. We were feeling as if we had been born and grew up in that camp. We were unable to think about our families and ourselves. We would only think when they were going to give that bread cooked on steam to us.

For the first time, I have learnt about the black room and what is happening there from a 25-year-old girl. She was hanged by her hands to the ceiling and cold water was thrown at her and beaten with chain. When I asked her "Have you suffered from a sexual assault?", she did not say yes or no, she just started crying. Her name was Arzuhan. That was the first time I heard about and came to understand the rape and harassment. Then, each woman I asked about this cried and I, too, started crying when they asked me because they had started taking me to the black room, too.

I saw two interrogation rooms at the camp where we stayed. One was on the ground floor with cameras. Nobody would hear us even if we screamed during interrogation in that room. They would place a black bag on our head when they took us to the other one. There was a bed in that one, but no cameras. I was sexually assaulted there for several times, therefore I just cannot pull myself back together, I weep whenever I talk about it. They were always three people. They, once, interrogated me for 24 hours. They did not give me water and did not let me go to the toilet. Whenever they took me to the black room with no camera, they were raping and harassing me all the time, I do not know how many times, though. Two police officers were holding my hands and the other was assaulting me. This was happening regularly. For the first three months I spent there, they did not take me to interrogation, yet they took me to interrogation later. I am not really sure for how many times that happened, but they would come and take me, interrogate me, then, take me to the room, and they would take me again after a while.

¹⁰⁵ It is thought that Gülbahar Celilova had more access to medical aid than the Chinese citizen victims for she was a citizen of another country, her family made a great effort and applied to international organizations and Kazakhstan state.

There was a woman called Gölzara aged 36. She was from Aksu. She was working as a tailor in Urumqi. Gölzara would be taken to that room and would return with her face in blood and traces of beating after each trip to that room. Prosecutions were not being done by legal means. Whenever they wanted, they would pick up prosecution documents and take people, and they would rape them using the interrogation as a pretext.

They did not care about the age difference there. I was 52 when they took me to the camp. Rapists and torturers there were generally young Chinese police officers in their 20s. When I told them, “don’t you have a mother, sister?”, they would reply saying, “you’re an animal, you’re a piece of shit, not a mother or a sister”. (Cries) Everyone from that ward suffered from sexual assault. I know that everyone suffered from an assault regardless of age.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Interview conducted with Gölbahar Celilova on 26.04.2021.



Tuhan Hacı

53, mother of four. She was engaged in farming and animal breeding with her husband in a small village of the city of Korla, Uyghur Autonomous Region. She had dedicated herself to her children. She wanted them, her daughter in particular, to have a good education more than anything else. She used to tell her children. "Education will change your destiny and you'll live under a lot better conditions". Her dreams had begun to come true with her elder daughter. Her daughter had been accepted to one of China's best universities. She was so happy. Tuhan's daughter was also accepted to graduate studies after graduating from the university in Beijing. She was the first student ever to study for master's degree. Her daughter was going to continue to please them. She was accepted as a doctoral student from a foreign university. Tuhan was both happy and worried. The source of her worries was a dream she had a long time ago. Four birds had flown out their home, three had returned but one of them had not. She had waited for that bird to return for so long in her dream... Tuhan had shared her dream with her daughter and when she was about to start her education at the university, for master's degree and, finally, when she was leaving China for her doctoral studies. She had said, "I am afraid, you might be that bird that has flown away and never returned."

Tuhan was an ordinary mother living with her hopes about her children. She was taken to the camp in Spring 2017 when mass detentions started. Just like her family and most of her neighbors. While she was being taken there, those taking her told her that the transformation education was to end one month later and she was to return home, just as they told rest of the Uyghurs taken. Her daughter who was a doctoral student could only find out that her mother had been taken to the camp 15 days later. She was going to find out that her grandmother had died from the mouth of a police officer one year and three months later. That one month never ended as told by those taking her. Local police officers told Tuhan's daughter that "your mother will be released soon, everything will get faster if you cooperate with us." They told her to go to cocktails at the Chinese Embassy and she did. They told her to post some photos with Han Chinese students and she did. The Chinese police

officers immediately answered whenever she sent a message or called, regardless of the time difference, round the clock. But, her mother did not return. Her father who was taken to camps as a healthy man returned with severe vision loss, gait disturbance and many other ailments. By the time this report was written, it has been 4 years and 3 months since Tuhani Hacı was taken to camps. But, she had not returned yet.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Interview conducted with Rabigül Hacımuhammed on 23.03.2021.



Mihriay Erkin

She was born in Kashgar, one of the historical cities of Uyghur Region and completed her high education in Shanghai as a very successful student. After completing her graduate studies in the University of Tokyo, she had started working in the field of biotechnology as a researcher at Nara Science and Technology Institute of Japan. Just like any other Uyghur living outside China, Mihriay was, too, threatened by Chinese police officers with her family. Police officers contacting her wanted her to persuade her uncle Abdülveli Ayup, Uyghur writer, to stop making explanations on concentration camps via social media and the international media. Mihriay tried to do whatever she was told to do so in order to prevent her family in Kashgar from getting into trouble.

Her family insisted that their daughter returned to China, hoping that the police repression over them would end. Abdülveli Ayup, her uncle, opposed to that idea. He was worried about what might happen to her upon her return. The last time Mihriay talked to her uncle when she was on her way to the airport for return to China in August 2019. Her uncle could not stop Mihriay's return. Just like Mihriay failed to stop her uncle from posting the disaster that hit the Uyghur.

Her family was informed in December 2020 that Mihriay died in camps. Their daughter's corpse was delivered to the family, provided that they would announce that she had died at home, and an official report was issued accordingly.

Abdülveli Ayup only found out what happened to her niece whom he could not stop from returning to China in May 2021.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Interview conducted with Abdulveli Ayup on 23.05.2021.



Rahile Davut

She was a professor at Xinjiang University. She was being considered a very competent specialist with her studies on Uyghur culture by international scientific circles. She had established the Center for Ethnic Minorities Culture Researches at the university where she worked and prepared a comprehensive inventory of Uyghurs' historical cultural assets. Academicians, from all around the world, conducting studies on the Uyghur mentions Professor Rahile Davut as one of the first specialists they resort to for their studies. Professor Davut was a role model for female Uyghur students in particular and academicians from different parts of the world speaking their minds in the social media and the international media refer to helpfulness, friendliness, hospitality of Rahile Davut and the great contribution she made to their studies. Rahile Davut was taken to camps in December 2017. Nobody heard from her since that date.

5.6. Forced Labor Centers

Even if the Chinese administration employed the Uyghur at certain industries for very low wages against their will for many years, forced labor policy intended for Uyghurs has only made a tremendous impact in the international sense in the last few years when discussion over concentration camps started. Forced labor, especially during the era of Xi administration, became widespread within scope of the policy called fight with poverty and continued to be strictly put into practice under the name of “vocational training”, after being integrated with camps soon. Research conducted and satellite images derived, especially after 2019, disclosed hundreds of mills built adjacent to camps, starting from 2018, and made it clear that the issue of forced labor must be discussed seriously.

Adrian Zenz who conducted one of the first studies on China’s forced labor policy intended for Uyghurs summarizes the plan composed of 6 items prepared by the Chinese administration within scope of the policy on fight with poverty with the purpose of so-called improvement of economic status of 2,61 million Uyghurs who lived in Uyghur Autonomous Region from 2016 to 2020 (20% of Uyghurs living in the region according to official figures of China): i) Transfer of workers to various parts of Uyghur Autonomous Region as labor force, ii) Transfer of workers to various parts of China as labor force, iii) Transfer of workers to Xinjiang Production and Construction Associations, an economic and paramilitary organization under control of the Chinese administration, iv) Moving workers to urban industrial areas, v) Transfer of workers to satellite mills as labor force and (6) Supporting of small-scale self-employment ventures.¹⁰⁹ Pursuant to such plan, Chinese administration made it imperative or at least one member of each household to work in the said areas, claiming that vocational skills of Uyghurs will improve and their economic status will be enhanced. The administration had, during the said era, encouraged employment of Uyghur women within scope of such plan, making the propaganda that working at a mill is a requirement of the modern life and liberates individuals.

The issue of force labor that became a hot topic shortly after concentration camps started to be discussed with all details was, primarily, addressed specifically in terms of mills built adjacent to camps, yet severity of the issue was understood soon and it came to light that China had exposed Uyghurs outside the camp to forced labor and made them live under inhumane conditions at places to which they went to work. Australian Strategic Policy Institute, in a report released by it, explained that number of Uyghurs leaving Uyghur Autonomous Region, from 2017 and 2019, to be employed as forced labor is over 80 thousand.¹¹⁰ Another striking piece of information in that report is that Uyghurs were being employed at mills that are part of the supply chain of minimum 82 global brands from technology, clothing and automotive industry. Upon a rise in reactions, some companies made an explanation and denied such information,¹¹¹ whereas some others started a detailed inspection about mills that are part of the supply chain,¹¹² and others announced that the Chinese administration was responsible.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Adrian Zenz. (2019). Beyond the Camps: Beijing’s Long-Term Scheme of Coercive Labor, Poverty Alleviation and Social Control in Xinjiang. *Journal of Political Risk* 7. no. 12. 2019. Accessed on May 24, 2021.

¹¹⁰ Australian Strategic Policy Institute. (2020). Uyghurs for sale: ‘Re-education’, forced labour and surveillance beyond Xinjiang.

¹¹¹ Business & Human Rights Resource Center. (2020). Nike’s Response. Accessed on May 24, 2021.

¹¹² Business & Human Rights Resource Center. (2020). Adidas’ Response. Accessed on May 24, 2021.

¹¹³ Business & Human Rights Resource Center. (2020). BMW’s Response. Accessed on May 24, 2021.

Many resolutions for sanction against China were passed in the second half of 2020 following release of such report. Some Chinese companies using forced labor were blacklisted whereas many human rights organizations in countries such as USA, Australia, Denmark, Japan called for a boycott against China because Uyghur workers are being intensely employed at the cotton industry.

Despite of all these developments, the Chinese administration continues to employ Uyghur workers at mills built next to concentration camps. Besides, Uyghurs completing the so-called education at camps are being transferred to mills at different parts of the nation as forced labor without informing their families. Detailed researches conducted by BBC show that there are hundreds of thousands of Uyghurs forced to work as seasonal workers in the cotton industry alone,¹¹⁴ Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs disturbed such research sent a fax to BBC, denying that Uyghurs are being employed as forced labor. The ministry alleges that all workers working at Uyghur Autonomous Region from different ethnic groups have chosen jobs they work at consentingly and labor contracts have been signed within a legal framework, adding that “Smiling faces of all ethnic groups from Xinjiang are the best answer to be given for lies and rumors of the USA.”¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ John Sudworth. (2020). China’s ‘tainted’ cotton. BBC. December 2020. Accessed on May 24, 2021.

¹¹⁵ John Sudworth. (2020). China’s ‘tainted’ cotton. BBC. December 2020. Accessed on May 24, 2021.



We derive some crucial information from interviews conducted by us about inhumane conditions Uyghurs employed as forced labor are exposed to, let alone the “smile” as alleged by the Ministry. During the interview conducted with Medine Nazimi, we find out that forced labor has a long history and some of Uyghur youngsters, in early 2000s, living in villages of Uyghur Autonomous Region, some of whom are younger than 18 years of age, were taken to inner regions of China and put to work after being persuaded with the promise of making handsome amount of money. Nazimi pointing out that it was a trap and some youngsters left their villages voluntarily in order to work at those jobs tells us that the real picture is not what it looks like and children leaving their homes and taken away are being employed under inhumane conditions for a very little money.¹¹⁶ For instance, the check 4 to 5 people would pay after eating dinner at a restaurant is 500 Chinese Yuan whereas the salary paid to those working as forced labor is 500 to 600 Yuan. Therefore, we ascertain that we are faced with two different human rights violations regarding both child labor and forced labor.

¹¹⁶ Interview conducted with Medine Nazimi on 08.04.2021.

Abdurahim Geni, a chemist, with whom we have conducted an interview, confirms, based on his own experience, using children as forced labor is not something new. Gani says, “I had witnessed coercive cotton picking practices when I worked as a teacher. The school would receive an order and students would be forced to go and pick cotton. I am someone who personally took them and experienced it” and shares his own observations and provides critical details on how forced labor was put into practice before concentration camps: “The said forced labor, especially cotton picking job, seems to have emerged after concentration camps, yet it was in place from 2002 to 2004 when I worked as a teacher. Students would be taken and asked to pick cotton for 12 hours during the summer. My niece had also been taken to cotton picking for one month when she was a second grader. this was the case 20 years ago. Children would be taken away to work at cotton fields with boarding for a whole month. Children would sleep in barns over haystacks when they were away. Teachers, however, would sleep at houses. Students would not be able to take a shower for a whole month. Students would be assigned to tasks based on their ages. Young children were obliged to pick 35 kg cotton a day, ones a little older than them 40 kg a day, older ones 45 kg a day, and they were required to satisfy that quota. Since our school had both Chinese and Uyghur students, the Chinese would go there, too, yet they would not stay there as long as we did. They would stay there for about two weeks and they would not be assigned to tasks. Kilogram was not a problem for them, and they would pick as much cotton as they could.”¹¹⁷

As a result of the interview conducted with Nazimi and Gani, we understand that China has been implementing forced labor for at least 20 years on school children in particular and, during such practice, Chinese students sharing the same school with the Uyghur are assigned to forced labor tasks under a lot better conditions and for shorter periods.

The interview conducted by us with Anthropologist Darren Byler shows us that not only Uyghurs kept at concentration camps but also persons whose relatives are at concentration camps are being used as forced labor. Byler explains both groups forced to slave labor and his experiences in the following: “Most of the individuals released from camps are being transferred to mills for forced labor. Administrators of mills even come to camps and choose workers. Persons I have interviewed tell that they are either paid no money or paid a salary equal to 1/6 of the minimum wage. That sum only suffices to buy basic necessities from the grocery store at the mill. Youngsters do not go home at night, they either stay at those places inside the mill where they sleep or the dormitory of the mill. They continue to receive education on China and its political ideology. During trips from dormitory and the mill, they undergo body search and their phones are checked on a regular basis. On the other hand, relatives of those detainees kept at concentration camps are frequently transferred to mills for working. Although these people work under conditions that are relatively better than those transferred from camps, the state may make deductions from their income due to transportation, accommodation and similar expenses. Although it is hard to say for sure at the moment, we believe that there are hundreds of thousands of Uyghurs working as forced labor.”¹¹⁸

Based on the interview conducted by us with Nursiman Abdürreşit, we become aware that the Chinese administration, unlike the “economic liberation” claims, Uyghur children and youngsters working as forced labor under inhuman conditions are burdened with debt. Abdürreşit tells us about what she experienced at a yarn mill: “This is not something that started recently. They used to do it when we were children. As of 2006, following contracts concluded with mills, they started taking away those children not attending any school or high school based on articles

¹¹⁷ Interview conducted with Abdurehim Geni on 01.04.2021.

¹¹⁸ Interview conducted with Darren Byler on 09.04.2021.

of contracts such as '200 girls, 200 boys form this village.' I was learning Chinese in a city of China. Some girls from the village of my mother had been brought to the city where I was. Her friends told my mother, 'My daughter is in the same place as your daughter. Is my daughter there? Is she good? Can she check on her?' So, I went to the mill. It was a yarn mill. The officer in charge of the mill was a friend of my father's, so, he let me in. I had a chance of seeing inside of the mill. The mill was so large, yet a small portion of it was operating. I think that place was an abandoned mill and they were running a part of it under some harsh conditions for they managed to find cheap labor force. It turns out that the Chinese were working in the morning shift. They would make Uyghurs work in the nighttime. So, I stepped into a room. I saw a piece of paper that reads as, 'This person worked for this much, and this is the wage earned. This person worked for this much, therefore no food and bed for her.' I saw it. Some of the children even owed 800-1000 Yuan to the mill. I mean, they were becoming indebted even if they were working."¹¹⁹

We draw three critical conclusions with the contribution of what Abdürreşit told us about her personal observations at the mill where slave labor force worked. The first one of them is making slave workers some of whom are children work in isolation under harsh conditions so that they cannot reach out to their families. The second is that the Chinese administration was already implementing the forced labor long before the policy on "fight with poverty" and project of concentration camps were put into practice. The third is that forced labor employed under the name of "fight with poverty" or "economic development" are actually being subjected to penalties, through a method of mandatory burdening with debt, and detained at mills until they repay their debts. Therefore, we are faced with a serious case that needs to be examined in respect of labor abuse, cruel treatment, forced detention and many other aspects.

K. Altay, a businessman from Urumqi, explains extent of the bad treatment and its impact upon Uyghurs: "My two uncles named Abdulveli and Ahmet are being employed as forced labor. My uncle Ahmet is in a lot bigger distress. He works Monday through Saturday evening at the force labor mill. He works for around 16 hours a day at a production mill, near Urumqi. He works Monday through Saturday and stays there at nights. He goes home at Saturday nights, sees his children, shops for my father and he returns to the mill by Sunday night. At large camps, Uyghurs are either killed or leave those camps as walking corpses. Some die and some even consent to work at the mill. Those released from camps start working at the mill if they are fit to work. They are paid 500 Yuan a month which is symbolic. The impression that people working at mills are paid for their labor is created just like they create the impression that central mosques are open in Eastern Turkistan and people are allowed to freely perform five daily prayers is created. Cases of suicide are common due to harsh working conditions. Whenever a case of suicide occurs, all workers thereat are punished; which means working for longer hours or not taking Sunday off. It turns out that people think to themselves that 'if I take my own life, people will be punished because of me.' Yet, 2 to 3 cases of suicide occurred anyway. My cousin Abdulkahhar has a daughter called Dildar. Dildar worked at a phone mill. I do not know much about that mill since my cousin can only meet my father once a month or every 2 months."¹²⁰

We understand that the Chinese administration is violating labor standards and worker's rights generally accepted in the international society, notably, Forced Labor Convention nr. 29 of

¹¹⁹ Interview conducted with Nursiman Abdürreşit on 07.04.2021.

¹²⁰ Interview conducted with K. Altay on 27.03.2021.

International Labor Organization, adopted in 1930.¹²¹ Uyghurs, employed as slave workers, committing a suicide in view of aggravated working conditions or worker deaths caused by reasons we are not aware of yet (occupational accident, murder, etc.) make it imperative to take urgent action.

We acquire critical information on the sexual harassment and abuse for female workers aspect of the aforesaid cruel treatment from the interview conducted by us. Mahmud says, as a summary of the situation, “Uyghur families from Hotan region were bringing their young daughters of 16 years of age to our region in an effort to conceal them from the Chinese government. The Chinese government was transferring young girls graduating from the high school to mills as workers against their will. Girls transferred to those mills may also be forced to prostitution in China. Girls who return would suffer from a bad psychology and would never be like they used to be. We would hear that girls were being raped there. Lives of those girls were being ruined. So, families would bring their daughters to our region, hoping to hide and protect them.”¹²²

In the interview we have conducted with Rabigül Hacimuhammed, a doctoral student, whose family members are being forced to work by the Chinese administration, we learn about both the treatment received by the female workers and the propaganda dimension of the issue. Hacimuhammed explains the situation as follows: “My father and brother were forced to work. They worked on textile production at mills inside camps. All camps are in Xinjiang. I could not learn anything about their lives there. Camps with mills in them were established. There are camps of varying types. I guess my mother is one of those camps with mills in them. My brother and father were, too, in those camps. Also, girls are being taken and forced to work. In 2006 when I started studying at the university, relatives of my friends from Kashgar (both girls and boys) came to a mill in south China to work there. My roommates had come and told me about it. They had told me how bad conditions were in those mills. Food is bad, too. The local government would ‘decide to transfer this or that number of persons from Kashgar as workers’ and they would take students as force labor in order to reach that number. Married people would not go. Families were making their 15 to 16-year-old daughters get married so that they would not be transferred as labor force. It was always said that the Chinese men abused girls there and managers at mills approached them with a bad intentions.”¹²³

In a press statement issued by China in August 2016 about Uyghur cotton workers, it had pointed out that it aimed to reinforce ideological education and sense of ethnic unity for Uyghurs made to work in cotton fields¹²⁴ Such strategy had evolved over the time and, in another document issued in 2020, the Chinese administration had stressed that persons in charge of cotton workers have to eat with Uyghurs, live, read and work with them, and actively give Uyghurs picking cotton thinking education.¹²⁵ By taking aforesaid documents as the starting point, it can be said that the Chinese administration aimed not only the forced labor but also the ideological transformation of Uyghurs through ideological propaganda made throughout the forced labor. As a matter of fact, we come across propaganda efforts intended for forced labor in the other interviews.

¹²¹ International Labor Organization. ILO. C029 - Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No.29). Accessed on May 24, 2021.

¹²² Interview conducted with Melike Mahmud on 06.04.2021.

¹²³ Interview conducted with Rabigül Hacimuhammed on 23.03.2021.

¹²⁴ John Chan. (2020). Report Shows Scale of Forced Labor in Xinjiang Cotton Industry. China Digital Times. December 15, 2020. Accessed on May 24, 2021.

¹²⁵ John Sudworth. (2020). China’s ‘tainted’ cotton. BBC. December 2020. Accessed on May 24, 2021.

We become aware of the following about forced labor and propaganda from the interview conducted with Şehide Ali: “This was something that was around when I was there (in Kashgar), too. I knew that because we had relatives in the village. We would hear news such as ‘x number of people from village y are being transferred to mill z for help.’ But, everyone was sad and propagandas were on rise. I was seeing girls being taken there against their will. I have found out that some people from among my relatives, my husband’s relatives and some distant relatives have been transferred to different cities and these people have returned home a few years later. Actually, this is an obligation and people are not able to resist it. These people are also taking classes at those mills where they work. We used to have classes on politics. They give these classes at the high school and also at secondary schools after the school hours every Friday. These classes are obligatory at the university. You must have these classes during meetings that are absolutely organized at state schools. We used to sing Communist Party red songs as students every morning. Someone would show up for those class hours and deliver speeches containing expressions such as, ‘Right now, our country is doing this, doing that for this reason, the most important thing for Xinjiang is security, we need to resist the terrorism, the religion is this or that, if you believe in religion, that will have bad consequences for you.’”¹²⁶

As a result of the said policy which China claims to be intended for “vocational training”, information derived from interviews conducted by us shows that many people who already had jobs and professions were forced to slave work. Melike Habibul saying that three brothers of her husband were taken to concentration camps in 2017, upon their release three years later, their farm were confiscated and they were taken to mills in another city to work against their will as forced labor, explains the situation below, “My husband’s brothers had been taken to concentration camps in Eastern Turkistan in May 2016. They could not hear from them until their release in 2020. Their own family did not have an idea about their whereabouts. They were released after I posted some information on them via social media. One of them said, for the place where they are made to work, ‘we get education for five days of the week, we learn about the law.’ They would pay 500 Yuan to people working at mills earlier. Currently, people working at mills have to pay for what they eat. For the fee to be paid for food, he said, ‘could you send us some money, we are out of money.’ We sent money to his family. Families of those working at mills hesitate to post anything on forced labor via social media, fearing that they would be taken out of mills and sent back to concentration camps. I have three friends of mine here, and they do not post anything on social media so that their husbands and relatives would not be taken out of mills and sent back to concentration camps. Şemsinur, my elder brother’s daughter, is 25 now. When she turned 20, they transferred her civil registry to another city. As she was about to get a passport there, she was caught by police, and they told her that “leaving the country is a crime.” they sentenced her to imprisonment for three years in May 2015. They made her stay at concentration camps for one year after she served time. a Chinese friend of ours told us that, from 2019 to 2020, she worked at the mill. So, I posted something about her and asked ‘why is this girl in prison?’ on the social media, then, it turns out, they released her.”¹²⁷ What is told by Habibul reveals that China abstains from social media campaigns launched about slave workers, probably because it does not want the reaction to grow with involvement of international actors. The aforesaid information and other similar information create a source of hope that the situation may improve to a certain extent if sufficient reaction is shown about what Uyghurs go through .

¹²⁶ Interview conducted with Şehide Ali on 27.03.2021.

¹²⁷ Interview conducted with Melike Habibul on 07.04.2021.

5.7. Children's Camps

Repressive policies implemented by China in Uyghur Autonomous Region became more visible along with the rise in number of concentration camps starting from 2016. Such camps have been positioned as high security bases accompanied by assimilation, torture and a wide range of human rights violations. Chen Quanguo who was stationed in Tibet region was appointed to Uyghur Autonomous Region as the Secretary of the Communist Party in August 2016. We see that, after such appointment followed by rise in number of concentration camps and police force in the region, severity of the securitization policy so pursued increased to a great extent.

Policies implemented by the Chinese state in Uyghur Autonomous Region to date are not limited to the adult population. Raising the children entirely under control of the state, away from their families and Uyghur culture heritage and identity, who have been made to forget Uyghur Turkish and can only speak Chinese, thereby, as a Chinese individual, preferred by the state, is a part of the Sinicization policy which is one of the most fundamental targets of the Chinese Communist Party. While China is trying to criminalize symbols and behaviors associated with the Uyghur cultural heritage through the securitization approach, it is targeting children as the group on which it can implement Sinicization policy in the easiest way from a demographic point of view.

Testimonies shared during interviews confirm that children whose parents are at concentration camps are being kept at camps or children's homes controlled by the state. Kalbinur Tursun, 37, one of the Uyghurs we interviewed, has expressed that two of her seven children are in Turkey together with her, yet her husband and five of her children have been taken to a concentration camp in China and is unable to communicate with her family members in anyway. Besides, in December 2018, Kalbinur Tursun who says that she saw her daughter Ayşe Abdurrehim, aged 3.5, on a propaganda video shot by Chinese teachers and posted on Douyin (a Chinese app similar to TikTok) also says, "We used to live in Kashgar, yet that video is from the city of Hotan. So, this means that they have placed my children in different camps. I am looking forward to hearing from my children for the last two years, but no news so far. I asked the Chinese state about her fate after seeing my daughter's video. Nobody contacted me so far." and she further stresses that efforts by parents separated from their children to contact their families and children in a sound manner are constantly being ignored by the Chinese officials and China has rendered channels regarding citizenship formalities abroad non-functional.¹²⁸

Nursiman Abdürreşit, who tells us that children whose parents are at concentration camps have been transferred to propaganda camps says, "After mass detentions started, we think, children were, too, taken to the concentration camp. My brother's elder daughter aged 13, from his first marriage, was registered with our household. (An action taken to circumvent the official number of children limitation) I know that my niece was taken to the camp. Two other children of my elder brother from his second wife (aged 5 and 7) were staying with their mother, but what I was told that their mother return home once a month. Their mother works at mills as forced labor. Maybe those children are being taken care of by their grandmother or maybe they are at camps. We do not know whereabouts of my younger brother's children, their fate is still uncertain. We cannot hear from them."¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Interview conducted with Kalbinur Tursun on 07.04.2021.

¹²⁹ Interview conducted with Nursiman Abdürreşit on 07.04.2021.

Mothers failing to hear from their children who are now unaccompanied have expressed that they are unable to hear from their families through the embassy, either, despite of their time-consuming efforts. Amine Muhammedemin, of Hotan, saying that she was able to come to Turkey with two of her five children and she is unable to hear from her husband and three of her children, explains her current situation as follows: “My husband has been sentenced to imprisonment for 15 years just because my husband brought us to Turkey and sent money to us. My husband stayed at camps for 15 to 20 days. Then, in January 2017, he was imprisoned. He had stayed in Turkey for 15 days. I have never heard from my children after imprisonment of my husband. In late 2016, there were some rare instances when I was able to talk to my children and husband. My mother and father and everyone else were afraid of talking to me. Therefore, I was only contacting my husband. After his detention, my contact with my family has been cut off. Now, I am not sure whether my children are alive or not. One of my children who was 3 back then is now 8. My husband’s sister was taking care of them. Where are my children? Have they taken their aunt? I don’t know at all. I never got in touch with their aunt. We had patience for our husbands, families and siblings, yet sorrow for one’s children is a whole different thing. Does a mother want her daughter to die? But, I do. As I hear about tortures and rapes taking place at camps, I think to myself “my daughter had better die so that she would not suffer.” I wanted to commit a suicide, too. I am not able to tell you this suffering. (Cries) One of my children who was 8 back then is now 13. I keep on worrying when all of these come to my mind. Those camps mean rape and many other things filled with suffering.”¹³⁰

We understand that many Uyghur families exceeding the child limitation provided for in Chinese laws tried to take their children out of China, driven by excessive encouragement for obtaining passport-visa of 2015 of which reasons was to be understood later in 2016 (against the likelihood of the state to take children from their families). When the efforts of fleeing the country were completed at one go and it was inevitable to divide the family into two because of unregistered children, some of the children are outside China, mostly, along with their mothers, the father returning to China to fetch the other children and children in China are in the Uyghur region since fathers’ passports were confiscated upon their return. We frequently come across the phenomenon that parents returning to take children out of China lose their passport as a result of confiscation are subsequently taken to camps and remaining children are taken to the state-run children’s camps.

Sudinisa Abdulim, another witness we talked with, explains that she never heard from her family remaining in Uyghur Autonomous Region for five years and her husband was arrested by the police and extradited to China while they she and her husband were in Saudi Arabia for Umrah as follows: “My husband was arrested in 2018, while in Saudi Arabia and was sent back to China. We do not know why. Everything was legal, we had residence permit and passports. We were in Mecca, and our stay there was legal. They took my husband from our house in Mecca for no reason at all. In 2016, two children of mine had come to Turkey for education and I, too, came to Turkey after my husband was taken. I have a son who was born after arrest of my husband, he is now 5 and never saw his father. I have six children, three of them are here with me, yet three of them are in Eastern Turkistan. I have not slept properly for five years. It turns out that not being able to hear from one’s children is a great suffering. I had left my home and homeland for Umrah that was supposed to last for only one month, and I could not return there.”¹³¹

¹³⁰ Interview conducted with Amine Muhammedemin on 07.04.2021.

¹³¹ Interview conducted with Sudinisa Abdulim on 07.04.2021.

Sudinisa Abdulim who also pointed out that she tries to hear from her family through a friend living in Urumqi says, “In October 2016, a friend of ours came to Mecca from Urumqi, and that friend told us that. “The state confiscated your houses and everything you own. Do not ever come back” That friend also told us what he went through and said. “They took our children to the prison. You’d go through the same.” we were unable to hear from one another since 2016, and I spoke to my 24 -year-old daughter on the phone for the last time in January 2017 and I did not hear her voice ever again. She did not tell me about any problem. They took my 24-year-old daughter and her husband to camps. Three children of my daughter and my two children are now unaccompanied. Her children (my grandchildren), my children are all unattended now.” and she told us that her contact with her broken family and grandchildren was cut off and she worries about lives of her children.¹³²

Meryem Abdulhamit, of Turfan city, who has shared her personal experience on coercive birth control policy and sterilization, says: “Officials at the municipality heard about my pregnancy and I was forced to go to the doctor for abortion. Since I had 7 to 8 abortions previously, they told me, “we can’t do it this time, you’re sick and your life is in danger.” I was scared. Back in 2015, it was so easy to get a passport. So, I and my husband thought that we could take advantage of this. My husband told me: “you go to Turkey and I’ll come there with our daughter later on.” I had to go as soon as possible, so I got my passport and came. I came to Turkey my baby in my belly and two children of mine. My daughter and her father had stayed in the homeland. We had to flee for I was pregnant with my fourth child. My 12-year-old daughter had already been issued a passport, but they took it back from us. My daughter I was pregnant with has turned 5. After my husband was taken to camps, my daughter ended up with no father or mother and she has nobody. I would talk to her every once in a while and in our phone call in April 2017, she said, “they took my father because of you.” I tried to contact my relatives, yet they blocked me via WeChat all of a sudden. I was expecting to speak to my daughter sooner or later, yet I never heard from her. She was 12 years old and she is 17 now. I believe that my daughter has been taken to boarding schools of China. We tried to submit a petition to Chinese Embassy and Chinese Consulate-General but they did not receive petitions, they never replied.” and she has expressed that she has no contact with her children.

5.8. Uyghurs Remaining Outside China

As gigantic camp constructions drew near to end in spring months of 2017, this was the period that saw the most intense waves of mass detentions. And this was the first time Uyghurs ever experienced something of this scale. When narratives of victims and their relatives, specialists’ opinions and figures shared by the Chinese state media as “education” statistics for propaganda purposes are taken into account, we estimate that around 3 million (we believe that such number is over 7 million when those released on probation and transferred to forced labor as at June 2021) Uyghurs and Kazakhs were taken to camps by 2018. Those kept at children’s camps are not included in the aforesaid number.

Detention of millions of people in a very short time, failure of their families to hear from them, there being no legal process to be pursued had horrified those living Uyghur Autonomous Region and those living outside China with relatives living in the said region. What relatives of victims living in almost all parts of the world went through is a lot similar. First, their usual conversations they had with their family members via common Chinese communication apps such as WeChat or home phones-cell phones started changing. Their addressees had started demonstrating a obvious hesitation ever since mass detentions started. Most of them told their relatives: “Things have changed here to a great extent, nobody knows what is going

¹³² Interview conducted with Sudinisa Abdulim on 07.04.2021.

to happen next. Do not ever return until things settle down.” Such period did not last for so long. Soon, relatives of victims saw all family members and acquaintances in China deleting them from their social media accounts. If anyone picked up the phone, they were telling the call that they had better not call them for a while and hanging up. This was because people found out that detentions were partly because of contacting with relatives living abroad. In the period of 2017-2018, hundreds of thousands of Uyghurs living abroad totally were no longer able to hear from their relatives. Again, during the same period; local police started calling Uyghurs living outside China and advised them to return to China. In later months, advices became harsher and harsher and they started telling them. “unless you return, we’ll take members of your family who are outside.” Families contacting their relatives abroad under supervision of the police constitute a phenomenon that occurred in the same period. Parents, in company of the police, were telling their children with shaking voices “how good the State is taking care of them and how successful the work of Chinese Communist Party is.” Then, they would add : “You should return already, everything is so good here”. Following such phone calls, many parents, taking a great risk, contact their children and caution them “for not returning ever” through their Chinese neighbors at times or their children’s Chinese friends at other times.

Assets of detainees were being confiscated, if they had children in need of care, relatives remaining outside were not mostly allowed to take care of those children and children were being taken by officials. Nobody was able to hear from those children taken away, just as nobody heard from adults taken away. If anyone insisted to find out about those taken away, that person could be, too, taken to the camp. Fear and silence dominated the entire Uyghur region. Nobody was able to interpret what was happening and it was hoped that this was something temporary. But, it was not temporary. Uyghurs living outside China were expecting that the anxiety they sensed at the last phone call they had with their families was something temporary and local police officers they were able to contact were telling them, “you remain silent, this is a situation not like the past, yet it is temporary.” Uyghurs in Diaspora had come to understand that mass detentions were in progress. Their contact with their relatives was completely over. Starting from 2017, they failed to get in touch with many people they know. Uyghurs studying or working in the mainland China asked the Chinese friends for help. Many helped them. Chinese friends of victims’ relatives who travelled to Uyghur cities, saying “don’t worry, there should not be anything important, I’ll go and see your relatives” encountered the reality of deserted cities and families that vanished into thin air. They told their Uyghur friends what they saw. Uyghurs and Kazaks who realized that this is not something temporary and remaining silent will not be good for their relatives started telling what they went through starting from 2018. Rabigül who was a PhD student outside China say: “First, I was afraid of testifying via social media, but now I think that I am the only hope and voice of my family and my mother. If remaining silent had borne any fruits, that would have happened in the last three years when I remained silent. Tomorrow (March 23, 2021) will be the fourth anniversary of my last call with my mother.”¹³³

Abdullah Rasul from Toksun city of Uyghur Autonomous Region tells us the following: My uncle who came and visited me in Turkey in April, 2017 returned to Uyghur Autonomous Region. Back in those days, we had just started getting news about concentration camps. He was communicating with her daughter via WeChat. They had taken her wife to camps. The daughter told my uncle, “Dad, you have to return, if you don’t, they told me that they won’t release my mother. They’ll take me, too, if you do not return.” So, my uncle could not withstand this. I had told him to wait for some horrible news were coming. My uncle was a farmer in his hometown. We could not stop my uncle, he returned. He disappeared at the airport as soon

¹³³ Interview conducted with Rabigül Hacimuhammed on 23.03.2021.

as he returned. I have not heard from him so far. His daughter contacted me. I asked, “Did my uncle land? Have you seen him?” and she said, “yes, he arrived, I saw him arriving, but I saw him for a 3 to 4 seconds, then they took him.” Then, she deleted me. I could not hear from her, too, ever again.

In June 2018, I got some news from a source. (does not give details for the security of the source). My father died four months ago. My mother, sister, elder brother and many of my relatives were taken to concentration camps. “That’s all I can say” said the person I talked to. That person was scared, too, and said, “Streets, bazaars are all empty. They’re taking everyone.” I can’t say that I lost touch with that person, yet we are able to speak very briefly over every 2 to 3 months. Then, I prepared a list. People who I think have been taken to the camp: my family, relatives, neighbors and friends: 120 people. Thanks to a cousin of mine who stayed in camps and was released, I got some information from him and clarified who is inside and who is outside. But, he did not tell me anything about the concentration camp. I was able to talk to my cousin on my former partner’s phone (who is a foreigner) via Whatsapp. I only asked him if “this relative or that relative is” and he answered by only saying “yes” or “no.” He did not give any information about camps although I insisted.”¹³⁴

What was told was very attention grabbing, yet it was hard to believe, as well. The world public started to realize that this hard-to-believe situation is true only after some camp victims (thanks to holding citizenship of a foreign country and released owing to efforts those foreign countries) managed to flee China and started telling what they went through. Victims, relatives of victims, exemplary journalist works, satellite images, documents leaked and, above all, propaganda publications as to why China prefers it this way, which are hard for anyone living outside China to understand, ensured that the magnitude of what is occurring was understood. Concentration camps at a size unprecedented since WWII had been established in Uyghur Autonomous Region of China. World’s civilian communication with the region had been cut off to a great extent. Hundreds of thousands of Uyghurs outside China were unable to properly get in touch with their relatives since 2017.

When Uyghurs and Kazakhs outside China started making their voices heard via social media and the international media about their relatives they were unable to contact since 2018, Chinese officials extensively resorted to the method of threatening to silence those voices. The Chinese police officers contacted, via common apps such as WeChat, those telling via social media that they are unable to contact their parents and siblings for years and worry about their lives and told them to stop their posting or else it would not be good for their families. When such threats by Chinese officials failed to silence Uyghurs, they tried a new method. Relatives living abroad were contacted by family members staying at camps or released on probation in company of police officers. What many victim relatives we have interviewed told us was almost identical. Camp victim family members who have not heard the voice of their children and relatives for years consistently told similar things in an anxious tone: “We’re very well, our state is taking very good care of us. We’re so pleased with policies of our party. We’re being educated and learning the language of our state. We’re getting rid of our bad ideas. You’re doing wrong. Do not defame our state. Do not ever make any statements”.

Although Uyghurs living abroad were trying to get some details on their relatives’ condition and their health, these conversations were only limited to giving credit to “the state and the Communist Party.”

¹³⁴ Interview conducted with Abdullah Rasul on 06.04.2021.

What is told to us by Dr. Halmurat Uygur, who shared the first phone call after a long while with his parents in company of police, is one of many examples confirming the aforesaid situation: “It was for bidden for my mother and father to communicate including WeChat for the first 6 months following their release. They would go to a governmental office and get an appointment in advance to be able to contact me. They could only called me from the office. Our first conversation with them that occurred 19 months was so abnormal. Both mom and dad talked to me in a very strange fashion. It was a very formal conversation free from excitement. All they told me was “we’re good, everything is fine” but nothing else outside such context. During our fist conversation, I asked them “how many weight did you lose?”, they did not even answer that question. I was not really happy with the way we talked. I wanted my mother and father to speak with me in their own house without the police. I did not pick up when they called me (when the police officers made them call me to ask me to stop posting things via social media). I also told them that this is not the way. 6 months later, we were able to talk normally (without the police) via WeChat. They had missed me a lot, and they were crying. We had a very warm conversation, yet they did not tell me anything about what happened at camps although I asked them about it insisently.”¹³⁵

Ömer Faruk, from city of Korla, who is unable to hear from his two young daughters and immediate family told about the police contacting him and the offer they made to him as follows: “Once my elder brothers were arrested, my children went to my mother-in-law’s. In November 2017, my father-in-law and mother-in-law were arrested, too. Until then, I was able to speak with my daughters, briefly though. Then, the entire communication broke off. I have not heard from my children since then. Upon start of detentions, all relatives and even my elder brother had deleted me from WeChat. So that we do not communicate with the outside world or else we would be taken to camps. After my elder brother was arrested, too, I started posting testimony videos. Then, police officers from the Chinese intelligence who knew my elder brother wrote to me. “Your elder brother will be alright, he will be released once he completes his education at camps. We know that he is not guilty, but stop posting.” I waited for two months. I also asked those police officers about fate of my children, and they told me that they are “fine” and when I asked them about their “whereabouts”, they said, “they stay with your relatives”. When I said “I want to see them”, “it is not possible now”. “You can do something for us. Then, you can have you daughters and elder brother back” they made an offer; they told me that “there are Uyghur associations in the country where you are, build close contact with them, keep us updated. Blend in with them to the extent possible.” There was no way I could do this to my people, so, I didn’t.”¹³⁶ Jevlan Şirmehmet, one of the victim relatives, we have met, tells us that the Chinese police offered him to follow Uyghurs outside China and gather intelligence about them and report it to them and police officers were quite insistent.¹³⁷

What is told by Alfira Nurmuhammed, from city of Gulca, is similar to the experience of all Uyghurs living abroad: “We received some news from a distant relative of my wife: They took my parents and sister for they sent money to me. I did not know, back then, whether they took them to the prison or the camp. They also took my mother-in-law in those days. I expected them to be released at the end of one month, then, two months passed by, I was stilling waiting. A whole year passed by. In the meantime, everyone I know was deleting me from WeChat. Even if my sister deleted me from WeChat, I was able to view her status and posts. After 10 days, my sister did not update, then I started worrying. Then, I found out that they took my uncle and sister, too.

¹³⁵ Interview conducted with Halmurat Uygur on 31.03.2021.

¹³⁶ Interview conducted with Ömer Faruk on 07.04.2021.

¹³⁷ Interview conducted with Jevlan Şirmehmet on 08.04.2021.

It is possible to communicate with those sent to the prison after clarification of their sentence, in a restricted manner though, one cannot hear from those sent to camps in anyway. I asked my relatives, “when did they leave, when will they be back?”, they answered “we have no idea.” It has been four years and two months (the interview was conducted in April 2021) and I have not heard from my parents. I am not aware of how they are doing. My elder sister’s husband was arrested, too. (Abdurrehim Abdulaid/ Gulca) He was a healthy man, after spending 2.5 years at camps, he got out on a wheel chair. A healthy man at the age of 26 capable of walking is now unable to walk and has to use a wheel chair.”¹³⁸

Semet Abila, living in Norway,: “I spoke with my mother for the last time in September 2017. Then, there were no more phone, just like any other Uyghur. I tried to contact them and find out how they were doing for several times, but I failed. I felt something after the new year’s day in 2020. It felt like something bad happened. I tried really hard, I called everyone. I was not able to contact anybody. I asked other Uyghurs here and told them, “to share any news they receive with me, if they do.” A friend of ours was able to get some news in February 2020. My mother passed away. My last phone call with my mother was two and a half years. I have elder sisters and a brother, yet I am not able to contact anyone. How did that happen, how did she die? At a hospital? At camps? At home? I tried really hard to find out, yet I received no news.

In 2017, they started mass detentions. My mother had told me how things got bad back then. My mother was so agitated and worried during our phone calls back in 2017. “Things are very delicate, let’s not talk for long” she kept on saying. There was something wrong, but nobody was able to talk about it in details. During a phone call, my mother was a lot more upset than our previous conversations. She told me that my little brother had trouble with police there. She asked me to talk to intelligence police over then by saying “think of your brother”. “They want to talk to you, how about you talk to them?” said she. She insisted “do what they tell you to do.” Then, those police officers started calling me. They started sending messages via WhatsApp. WhatsApp is banned in China, but police officers there do use it in order to be able to contact people abroad. I know one of the police officers who sent me messages. I was friends with his siblings. His messages were polite: He asked me how I was doing. He asked about my parents. He told me that I should think about my mother a bit, that she was very old and they could make me meet my mother anywhere if I wanted. They offered cooperation with them. (Reporting information on the other Uyghurs) He told me that I could speak with my mother anytime I like if I cooperated I turned down the offer. Some horrible news were coming when we had this conversation. I also asked that police officer, “why are you jailing these people, what’s going on?” And he replied, “these people are terrorists, so, we take and educate them.” They called ordinary people terrorists. They were our relatives, neighbors, friends. The last time I called my mother, that police officer was with my mother at our house. It was September. My mother cried when she picked up the phone. In previous calls, she would ask me how I was doing, but this time she started crying the moment she picked the phone. “I have to tell the police when you called me” said she. I felt so upset. “It is so hard to live” said she. My mother told me how my little brother was arrested by the police 3 to 4 days ago, and my mother was not told where he was kept. This is all my mother told me in tears. It turns out that it was our last conversation.”¹³⁹

Kalbinur Sedik, with Uzbek origin, who told what people go through at camps from the eyes of someone not a convict (a teacher) and shared some priceless testimonies told us about how she fled China and what she left behind: “After I got retired, I wanted to go and live with my daughter in the Netherlands. However, in 2016, the Chinese government had seized my

¹³⁸ Interview conducted with Alfira Nurmuhammed on 07.04.2021.

¹³⁹ Interview conducted with Semet Abila on 01.04.2021.

passport and my husband's passport. They had started seizing everyone's passports back then. Being a civil servant does not make any difference. I tried really hard to get back the passport. I applied to around 20 offices but could not get it back. Officials said; "If you leave, you'll talk about what you saw here." My daughter got married and I couldn't go to the wedding. My daughter sent invitation for several times. I applied to many offices, eventually, someone showed mercy and said. "I think you can leave, you're an Uzbek, not a Uyghur." But, since my husband was Uyghur, he told him, "do not ever think of the passport." I managed to get back my passport after trying for 9 months. My husband was not able to leave the country. He is still in Eastern Turkistan. I managed to travel to the Netherlands. The last time I talked to him was February 23, 2020 via WeChat. They tortured him, saying "your wife was supposed to return within a month." (Cries) I have not heard from him ever again. I am not able to contact any one of my relatives now. My elder brother and siblings called me couple of times after I came here, and they heard that my husband was taken to the police station. Police officers made my relatives call me. "This happened to us just because you left, do you want us to die?" said some relatives. Then, everyone who knows me deleted me from the communication app. I have no contacts left. Maybe, they took all of them to camps."¹⁴⁰

6. Interventions with the Family Structure

China wishing to create a society of surveillance in order to support its policies of Sinicization and securitization has put into practice some very strict control mechanisms in Uyghur Autonomous Region. One of them is what they call "Sister Family" project. Jevlan Şirmehmet who studied law outside China describes the sister family project as follows, while testifying about his mother: "Both mom and dad were civil servants. the state had started assigning them to villages as from 2016. My parents were not police or army members. But, the state was assigning its civil servants to those places for security reasons. My mother was an accountant at the Ministry of Industry and they would assign all the people from her department to villages and make them mandatory relatives with locals. I accompanied mom couple of times. At first, they were Uyghur civil servants assigned to villages, like my parents. Then, they started assigning only the Han Chinese. I mean, it seemed to be intended for mingling of civil servants and peasants."¹⁴¹

Uyghurs started expressing their discontent when only the Han Chinese were sent to villages. Such practice that led to reactions and was found odd among Uyghurs appears as one of the state's methods for keeping families under control. In cases where male members of the family are taken to camps, civil servants declared "mandatory relatives" kept on being sent to villages with a view to watching daily lives of women and children remaining at home. Rabigül Hacimuhammed who testified for her mother, too, said, "In the winter of 2018, a relative of mine told me that "we'll have guests in our house". So, I asked "who", she replied "our new relatives." I repeated the same question. And she said "stop asking who, they are our new relatives." Then, her aunt came to help. Three Chinese officers in their 30s came to house and stayed overnight, too. It was only my relative, her aunt and her older brother who were at home."

Rabigül Hacimuhammed stressing that such practice aimed to intervene with private lives of remaining members of the family and function as an instrument of propaganda, "My relative's daughter who was taken to camps had shared a photo. A Chinese couple came to

¹⁴⁰ Interview conducted with Kalbinur Sedik on 26.03.2021.

¹⁴¹ Interview conducted with Jevlan Şirmemet on 08.04.2021.

their house, too. The Chinese family who came to visit shared a photo with my relative and her three children while my relative was away in camps. It is imperative to share those photos, for propaganda purposes. New relatives come to people's houses and hosts offer them food and drinks, and they watch Chinese TV stations. They make propaganda such as the politics is good now and the state is doing good things." says she while sharing what her family went through with the sister family project.¹⁴²

Abdurahman Satuk, from city of Korla, Uyghur Autonomous Region, has pointed out how he saw a photo of his relatives with the Chinese on the social media as follow: "I saw my uncle and cousin at a group created by the government via WeChat. I saw their photos with the Chinese officials as posted by the government. They sent a photo showing other relatives from my aunt's family with the Chinese who visited their house."¹⁴³

Abdurahim Geni, of Aksu, shared with us how he heard about the mandatory kinship and Sister Family Project for the first time: "My classmates from the university had a WeChat group. They would post photos and say that these are people from our sister family, they're our relatives. Then, I asked them how they found those Chinese people and they said that the government is assigning a Chinese relative to every family. 2015 was the year when I became familiar with the sister family project for the first time."¹⁴⁴

Şehide Ali, drawing attention to the fact that observes assigned to Uyghur family residences and Sister Family Project differ in practice, "Sister family interactions mostly occur in urban areas. On special days such as festivals and special days, two families mingle in with one another. They station observer soldiers in houses at villages where people do not tend to stand up. In Urumqi, Kashgar, male observers stationed in houses of remote villages when the ma of the household is not around." says she¹⁴⁵ The fact that traditional Uyghur identity is a lot more prominent in rural settlement areas seems to have caused an intensity in many security and Sinicization practices and one-on-one control mechanisms in those areas

Cevher İlham, daughter of Prof. Dr. İlham Tohti, the well-known Uyghur scientist who was sentenced to imprisonment for life has reminded that the Chinese state implements such practice with differing levels of severity in every region and said, "In general, male civil servants are assigned to surveillance of families. We hear that civil servants coming to spend time inside the house take advantage of this to get laid with women. I actually think the Chinese state deliberately assigns male civil servants."¹⁴⁶

We have listened to another observation that matches with what has been said by several witnesses from Abdulgeni Sabit, of Aksu. What he has told shows that different versions of the "sister family" were tried in the past in order to control Uyghurs in their own houses. "When I was still in Eastern Turkistan, the Sister Family Project had already begun. My elder brother was part of the team working at this project. There are two towns called Kızıl and Ayköl in Aksu where I was born and raised. These were the places densely populated by the Uyghur. Intellectuals, leading farmers and businesspeople of the area were all aware of the repressive politics the government was conducting over the Uyghur. The government had

¹⁴² Interview conducted with Rabigül Hacımuhammed on 23.03.2021

¹⁴³ Interview conducted with Abdurahman Satuk on 06.04.2021.

¹⁴⁴ Interview conducted with Abdurahim Geni on 01.04.2021.

¹⁴⁵ Interview conducted with Şehide Ali on 27.03.2021.

¹⁴⁶ Interview conducted with Cevher İlham on 20.04.2021.

stationed certain civil servants in houses of locals in order to be able to control them. This is how this project kicked off back then. This was how they implemented in 2000s. They had put into practice as a trial, following camps, now, the state is implementing this as an official and widespread project.”¹⁴⁷

Arslan Hidayet, a music teacher and son-in-law of Adil Mijit, a well-known Uyghur comedian, expresses that around 1.1 million Chinese civil servants were appointed as observers for the purpose of tracking families, remaining outside, of those men taken to camps. Arslan Hidayet, who stresses that the said civil servants check the daily life, especially whether or not they speak Uyghur Turkish, there is any religious tutorial, or there is a prayer rug, says, “We also heard of a lot of news concerning rapes taking place at those houses where such civil servants are stationed. We heard about some girls aged 13 to 15 who got knocked up and committed suicide.” and explains that observer civil servants paved the way for several criminal incidents.¹⁴⁸ Arslan Hidayet, who also shared the experience of Zümret Davut, his friend, about what she went through with the Sister Family Project, says, “Two families must absolutely see each other as part of the Sister Family Project. According to this project, everyone must have a sibling and that sibling must be from opposite gender. Zümret had a daughter aged 12. The state had assigned a 21-year-old Chinese man to her daughter. And that Chinese man kept on calling the daughter of Zümret. He was tracking every single day of the girl her by asking questions such as “did she go to the school, or when will she be back from the school” and he would say that he was going to pick her up from the school.” and expresses that even children younger than 18 years of age not taken to camps are being subjected to physical surveillance outside.¹⁴⁹ “Plus, you must eat meals the sister family eats. Besides, you must take photos at their houses and prove the situation to the state. For instance, they would serve pork and the Chinese family would understand the situation when you do not eat the pork. Zümret, at the house of her sister family, said, “I cannot eat pork”, the Chinese family members said; “you do not have to eat. I’ll take a picture of you while you pretend that you’re eating”. In a way, they did her a favor.” and points out that some Chinese families have been involved in this project against their will and showed understanding towards Uyghurs.¹⁵⁰ However, Arslan Hidayet adds that some empathizing Chinese families are unable to stand up for they have to even if they do not want to be involved in this inhuman practice. What we see is that the Chinese Communist Party aims to also include the minority communities which they strictly control through civil servants and widespread member network into the China’s ethnic and cultural structure by “getting rid of” their cultural identities but not only by transforming them from an ideological point of view. To that end, “mandatory kinship” is being implemented as a project to control and direct the family life which remains within the private zone, outside of the public life, and Uyghurs who are already worried due to millions of their taken to concentration camps are being kept under some sort of control, surveillance.

Ruşen Abbas, of Urumqi, testifying for his sister Dr. Gülşen Abbas, while speaking about a video he watched on WeChat, has said, “Everyone saw the footage of three Han Chinese men lying over the bed and a Uyghur women holding her baby, which was quite upsetting for Uyghurs. Because we heard based on previous statements that these civil servants are

¹⁴⁷ Interview conducted with Abdulgeni Sabit on 01.04.2021.

¹⁴⁸ Interview conducted with Arslan Hidayet on 25.03.2021.

¹⁴⁹ Interview conducted with Arslan Hidayet on 25.03.2021.

¹⁵⁰ Interview conducted with Arslan Hidayet on 25.03.2021.

raping women.”¹⁵¹ Ruşen Abbas explains that there are some other statements confirming such cases of rape and by saying “In cases where male family members are in camps, according to information received by us, the Chinese civil servants try to get laid with women against their will by blackmailing them with the report they are to write about them. Because if those civil servants write a report about you, suggesting that you have ‘radical thoughts’ or ‘performing five daily prayers at home’ to the government, this will cause you to be taken to the camp and your children to be “seized” by the state.” he sheds light on how rapes and threats especially lonely women face take place.¹⁵²

Ruşen Abbas, saying that some young women who have suffered from sexual assault have wanted to commit a suicide rather than withstanding such rapes, points out that there are so many young people asking questions such as “I know that suicide is haram according to our religion, but I will not be able to withstand rapes any longer. Is it appropriate for me to take my own life in this situation?” and he states that what a destructive treatment people are subjected to.¹⁵³

Ruşen Abbas says, “Although women writing these via WeChat wrote what they went through despite of knowing that the government is able to track contents of messages, which means such messages will result in more repression and rape for them. This shows how desperate the women being raped are.”¹⁵⁴

Prof. Dr. Erkin Sidik, another witness from Aksu province of Uyghur Autonomous Region, who expresses that everybody is aware of the dominance and tyranny “Sister Family Project” has over the women, says: “We know that the Chinese civil servants sleep in the same bed as Uyghur women at nights and cases of rape occurred. We also heard that some girls raped were made to marry the Chinese civil servants against their will. Additionally, we have seen a Chinese civil servant trying to make a Uyghur woman drink an alcoholic drink on one of the latest videos released. However, unfortunately, Uyghurs are not able to say no to this. Because they are aware that they will be taken concentration camps if they oppose.”¹⁵⁵

7. Policy on Forced Sterilization Against Women

Forced sterilization, compulsory birth control and abortion is a series of biopolitics practices implemented by states over “unwanted” groups of human, in particular, for many years. Such practices enable states to have domination over young and fertile woman body and to prevent population increase of a certain group of human (ethnic, cultural, religious, etc.), thereby, reducing the targeted human group to a level that can be easily assimilated.

Forced sterilization that was being commonly implemented in many countries until recently is defined by countless international initiative as human rights violation and genocide for it is in breach of the principles of the inviolability of the human body and is intended to assimilate and wipe out minority groups. For instance, the UN Genocide Treaty that came into force in 1951 describes birth control methods imposed for the purpose of wiping out part

¹⁵¹ Interview conducted with Ruşen Abbas on 21.04.2021.

¹⁵² Interview conducted with Ruşen Abbas on 21.04.2021.

¹⁵³ Interview conducted with Ruşen Abbas on 21.04.2021.

¹⁵⁴ Interview conducted with Ruşen Abbas on 21.04.2021.

¹⁵⁵ Interview conducted with Erkin Sidik on 01.04.2021.

or all of a certain national, ethnic and religious group and race.¹⁵⁶ Similarly, Rome Statute of International Criminal Court (ICC), which came into force in 2002 to which 123 countries are parties considers forced sterilization as a war crime and a crime against humanity.¹⁵⁷ UN Human Rights Council that has been conducting serious studies since late 1990s has announced that they consider forced sterilization and abortion practices as a serious human rights violation against vulnerable groups such as refugees and minorities.¹⁵⁸⁻¹⁵⁹

Despite of all developments occurring in the international medium, the Chinese administration insisted on implementing forced and systematic sterilization for Uyghur women. It became possible for the the policy of forced sterilization to make an enormous impact as a human rights violation in the international sense only after China's concentration camps started to be discussed as of 2017. Abdülgeni Sabit, during the interview we have conducted, stresses that repressive birth control practices in Eastern Turkistan started in 1984, and he witnessed imprisonment of Uyghurs with more than two children and demolition of their houses by the police. According to Sabit, even if the birth restriction softened in across the nation from 2016 to 2017, the birth ban continued to apply for the Uyghur.¹⁶⁰ In parallel to explanations of Sabit, Tahir Hamut, poet-man of letters, expresses that officers were appointed to municipalities for sterilization of women who gave birth to two children and his wife, too, was sterilized after birth of his children.¹⁶¹ Nursiman Abdürreşit sharing what her mother and her brother's wife went through expresses in the following how sterilization and compulsory birth control are being implemented in a systematic way: "Women were summoned to the village center once a month and they were being controlled for pregnancy. My mother had to take the birth control pill given by them. On each control day, my father would take my mother to somewhere else. But, the other women would have to undergo the control. My elder brother has one child from his first marriage and two children from his second. When my sister-in-law became pregnant with twins, since my elder brother would have five children in total, they terminated the pregnancy when she was three months pregnant.* The Chinese is also subject to a policy of restriction for number of children, yet they are not so willing to have children, they came into terms with the situation."¹⁶²

An incident that was told by Alfira Nurmuhammed and occurred in Gulca, in 1995, contains important details regarding compulsory and inhumane medical interventions women have been subjected to for such a long time: "My mother's cousin had three sons. Then, she became pregnant for the fourth time and she concealed her pregnancy until month nine. One day, she forgot to conceal her belly although there was someone who came to their house. That person informed the police. While she was cooking bread, a black car came and they intruded into the house and took my mother's cousin. They administered an injection to her

¹⁵⁶ Natalya McPartland. (2021). Forced Sterilizations In The US Contravene International Law. Human Rights Pulse. Accessed on May 21, 2021.

¹⁵⁷ International Criminal Court. Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Accessed on May 21, 2021.

¹⁵⁸ UNHCR. (2005). UNHCR Note on Refugee Claims Based on Coercive Family Planning Laws or Policies. Accessed on May 21, 2021.

¹⁵⁹ UN Economic and Social Council. (1999). Commission on Human Rights Fifty-Fifth Session Item 12(a) of the Provisional Agenda.

¹⁶⁰ Interview conducted with Abdülgeni Sabit on 01.04.2021.

¹⁶¹ Interview conducted with Tahir Hamut on 24.04.2021.

¹⁶² Interview conducted with Nursiman Abdürreşit on 07.04.2021.

*It is common among Uyghurs to have children registered in the name of their next of kin so as to circumvent the limit on number of children.

at the hospital which made her give birth to the baby. It was a girl. The baby cried, so, she was alive. The woman begged them to give the bay to her. However, people at the hospital killed the baby that was alive with an injection on her head. The woman stayed in bed for three to four months because of her suffering. Her mental health deteriorated. Then, they performed an operation on the same woman for birth control. She has been sick for as long as I can remember.”¹⁶³ This example requires investigation of possibility of a baby murder as well as medical interventions on women.

After Uyghur women who recently managed to get out of detention camps shared their personal experiences and details of medical interventions performed on women against their will at camps, significant data were acquired about results of the forced sterilization and abortion policy. Gülbahar Celilova, a businesswoman, sent to a detention camp in 2017, explains that everyone brought to the camp undergoes a urine test and those found out to be pregnant are promptly subjected to forced abortion operation. Celilova stresses that women at the camp are forced to take pills given to them twice a month and have an injection every ten days, and, following such procedures, their menstruation cycles completely end.¹⁶⁴ Kalbinur Sedik reports having witnessed death of a woman who had uninterrupted menstrual bleeding for a month and a half as an adverse impact of those pills.¹⁶⁵ We come across crucial details in the testimony by Almas Nizameddin, who lives in Australia, on Zeynep Abdurreşit, his wife, who was taken to camps. Nizameddin whose wife was taken to the concentration camp when she was pregnant with their first child, expressed that the Chinese officials informed him that his wife was no longer pregnant. Therefore, Abdurreşit was either underwent a forced abortion or lost her child due to maltreatment she had at camps.¹⁶⁶

Kalbinur Sedik who worked at detention camp as a Chinese teacher tells about her forced sterilization experience and her observations as follows: “Sterilization operation was made compulsory for all women aged 18 to 59, either at or outside the camps. This operation was also performed on me in May 2019. Those women refusing to have this operation were made to marry the Chinese against their will. Women who have children, yet not thinking of becoming pregnant again and even those who have no children must undergo this operation. I had this operation at my 50th birthday. We, as women waiting for the operation, had lined up just like sheep waiting to be sacrificed. Young girls aged 18 and older were also in the line. The line was so long that I waited for 4 hours before the operation. There are primary health care centers to which every residence address is assigned, and I had this operation at one of them. An elderly doctor and a nurse performed the operation. They gave me an injection, then, I passed out. I do not know how long it took, it lasted for half an hour or an hour. There are a few types of operations. One type makes it possible to have children after a certain treatment, yet what they did to me is not that type. I felt a great pain when I came round. The operation was not a success and I had lost a great deal of blood. I sent for my husband for I was not able to stand up, then, he came to pick me up. I stayed in the bed for 2 to 3 days. I have no idea what happens to those women kept at camps, who are taken to sterilization operation in groups of 50 to 100 people.”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ Interview conducted with Alfira Nurmammed on 07.04.2021.

¹⁶⁴ Interview conducted with Gülbahar Celilova on 26.04.2021.

¹⁶⁵ Interview conducted with Kalbinur Sedik on 26.03.2021.

¹⁶⁶ Interview conducted with Almas Nizameddin on 26.03.2021.

¹⁶⁷ Interview conducted with Kalbinur Sedik on 26.03.2021.

Darren Byler, during the interview with him, points out that, as part of Chinese administration's 'zero illegal birth' campaign, medical controls for Uyghur women increased and it was resolved to pay \$900 to individuals reporting their pregnant neighbor to official authorities as a reward. Byler who says that many official documents describe employment of men at camps and then at mills away from their homes as a method of birth control explains that the state offers financial incentive for marriages between the Han Chinese and Uyghur women, such incentive, mostly, turns into an element of repression and Uyghur women turning down the Han Chinese men wishing to marry them are forced to give "a valid reason" and religious beliefs differences are not accepted as a valid reason.¹⁶⁸

Adrian Zenz, anthropologist, who conducted the most comprehensive study on China's policy of assimilation by way of forced sterilization so far, shared, in a report issued in 2020, findings on demographic genocide that occurred with the public opinion.¹⁶⁹ The said report reveals that the population increase in two regions which are home to the largest Uyghur population dropped by 84 percent from 2015 to 2018. Target for 2020 and upcoming periods "near-zero population growth." Two of the most important methods implements for achieving such target are detention at camps and forced sterilization. Since China's detention camps initiative started, rate of being widowed and menopause increased by twofold for women with aged 18 to 49. Therefore, the Chinese administration managed to control the Uyghur population by keeping men at camps and sterilization of women through forced medical methods / making them go into menopause. On the other hand, the fact that population growth rate in regions densely populated by ethnic Han Chinese within Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region is 8 times higher than regions where Uyghurs live reveals that, contrary to claims of the Chinese administration, compulsory birth control a demographic genocide solely intended for the Uyghur population.

¹⁶⁸ Interview conducted with Darren Byler on 09.04.2021.

¹⁶⁹ Adrian Zenz. (2020). Sterilizations, IUDs, and Mandatory Birth Control: The CCP's Campaign to Suppress Uyghur Birthrates in Xinjiang. The Jamestown Foundation. Accessed on May 21, 2021.

8. Organ Trafficking in Uyghur Autonomous Region

There are sources indicating that China has the world's largest organ transplantation programme and three to four years of waiting periods for patients in USA, Canada and UK are a few weeks in China.¹⁷⁰ Dr. Enver Tohti, who worked a surgeon in Uyghur Autonomous Region during 90s, shared many organ transplantations without consent he performed with the public opinion. He mentions, in what he shared, a victim from whom he took body organs despite weak efforts of resistance while alive, who was shot below the chest in a way that would not kill the victim right away.¹⁷¹



*Kasgar Airport – Special passing way for body.
(Digitized the real photo.)*

China had admitted that it used organs of death row inmates without consent for transplantation procedures until 2015.¹⁷² Apart from whether or not China has actually discontinued such practice which it has announced it terminated in 2015, there are allegations that share of China has increased greatly in the legitimate “world organ market” after 2016. Many news were released which make us think that China’s share that soared quickly in the world illegal organ market is associated with Uyghurs taken to concentration camps through mass detentions.¹⁷³⁻¹⁷⁴ We have conducted several interviews that made us think that such news are true whilst preparing this report.

¹⁷⁰ International Support for Uyghurs. Uyghur Organ Harvesting.

¹⁷¹ BBC Sounds. China is being accused of carrying out a brutal crackdown on millions of Uighur. Accessed on May 21, 2021.

¹⁷² BBC News. (2014). China to stop harvesting executed prisoners’ organs. Accessed on May 21, 2021.

¹⁷³ WSJ Opinion. (2016). The Nightmare of Human Organ Harvesting in China. Accessed on May 21, 2021.

¹⁷⁴ Health Europa. (2020). Forced Organ Harvesting: “I’m going to China, they’re shooting my donor”. Accessed on May 21, 2021.

Tahir Hamut, a Uyghur intellectual, explains that organs required were always able to be found very quickly in every era: “Organ trafficking is not something new. They were able to find organs very quickly whenever the rich or government officials in the mainland China needed organs. This was something everyone heard about and was familiar with. Stealing organs of Uyghurs arrested and political criminals was something known which was heard frequently. We heard many news on stealing of the Uyghurs’ organs following mass detentions.”¹⁷⁵

Abdullah Rasul, of Toksun, says; “In 2010, they had detained an acquaintance from the neighboring village. The police brought that person back, yet dead and without organs.”¹⁷⁶ Şehide Ali stresses that organ theft was common before incidents of halal organ: “There were frequent cases of missing children in villages of our homeland long before incidents of halal organ. From 2012 to 2013, when I was at the secondary school and high school, incidents of young children being abducted, not being found or being found dead were quite common. Then, people would find out that their organs had been stolen.”¹⁷⁷

Camp victims we have interviewed point out that their blood samples were taken at short intervals on a regular basis and they were forced to take pills. Blood samples regularly taken from all victims at concentration camps where all conditions are as bad as possible and lack of medical aid is at the highest level is attention grabbing. Another common narrative of victims indicating that care is taken not to damage internal organs while performing torture during interrogations and punishments supports allegations.

Baktiali Nur, a camp victim, shared a suspicious incident he witnessed during our interview with him: “A Uyghur youngster from our room had been taken to the hospital. We realized that his chest had been opened and re-stitched upon his return. That boy passed away the next day. One can easily tell it was the scar of a recently performed operation. It was stitched, it looked like part on ribs was completely opened and then re-stitched. We do not know whether or not his organs were stolen, yet he died the next day. He was from Mazar village of Qapqal district.”¹⁷⁸

Kalbinur Sedik, one of the interviewees, who worked at camps as a teacher, says: “When I was unable to see some familiar faces, I would ask the police officers about them: they would say “We sent them to labor” or “they were sick and died.” It was said that a few of them were used for halal organ.”¹⁷⁹

These are testimonies strengthening the doubt that concentration camps were used by the Chinese Communist Party as an organ pool. It is seen that the largest buyer of this Uyghur organ pool which is hard to believe is the rich from the Middle, notably, demands for organ transplantations with Chinese origin are very high in small gulf countries. There are certain reasons for this which are attributed to the religion: Since Uyghurs are predominantly Muslim, it is assumed that they do not eat pork and consume alcoholic beverage. Based on such nutrition choice and the opinion that an organ transplanted from Muslims will be considered “halal”, which opinion is not true in terms of Islamic principles according to several religious scholars, it is thought that, thanks to regular blood samples taken at camps, organs of those

¹⁷⁵ Interview conducted with Tahir Hamut on 24.04.2021.

¹⁷⁶ Interview conducted with Abdullah Rasul on 06.04.2021.

¹⁷⁷ Interview conducted with Şehide Ali on 27.03.2021.

¹⁷⁸ Interview conducted with Baktiali Nur on 10.04.2021.

¹⁷⁹ Interview conducted with Kalbinur Sedik on 26.03.2021.

Uyghurs matching with patients looking for organs are extracted forcibly and, then, most of victims die. Many Chinese hospitals are trying to attract patients from all corners of the world to China by means of advertisements in English and Arabic, specifically targeting Muslim “customers.” Tongshantang Hospital in Beijing, at many websites, displays kidney transplantations and show at YouTube channel that they have canteen providing patients with halal food and a Muslim prayer room.¹⁸⁰ Arslan Hidayet, by saying “The Chinese meet in websites and social media of their own. Their internal organs are being sold to the Middle East through advertisements. While it is forbidden to go to the mosque, worship and saying that I won’t eat pork, the Chinese is advertising their hospitals, saying that we have masjid and halal restaurant at our hospitals. These hospitals are located in mainland China. The purpose is advertising with a view to increasing profitability in organ trade. It turns out that specially trained Chinese nurses are able speak Arabic there! This is how the system has been designed.” states that there exists a planned illegal organ transplantation tourism.¹⁸¹

9. Are the Chinese Aware of What is Happening?

There is not a single answer to that question. Basically, three main answers may be given for three different Chinese populations. However, there are smaller groups being separated from every main answer.

We can say that the large population in the mainland China is not aware of grave human rights violations happening in Uyghur Autonomous Region due to the harsh censorship mechanism of the China Communist Party, lack of internet freedom, intense policies of disinformation. During many interviews we have conducted which support such opinion, those victim relatives who have studied or engaged in trade in the mainland China mention that they asked their Chinese friends in the mainland China for help after disappearance of their families. Almost all of the victim relatives stating that they are unable to contact their families and fear that they might have been taken to camps were told by their Chinese friends that “such a thing may not be possible, they will travel to the respective region, if necessary, get in touch with their families.” Helpful Chinese who travelled to the region came across deserted cities and unoccupied houses of their friends. They shared the worry and confusion they had after seeing such a view with their friends who are relatives of victims. Mathias Bölinger of DW who went to Uyghur Autonomous Region in 2020 also encountered the view which Chinese friends of Uyghurs came across. Bölinger says that villages are quite empty and doors of houses have notices indicating for how long they have been unoccupied.¹⁸²

Uyghurs we have talked to hesitate to provide details regarding their Chinese friends who tried to help them. There are two reasons for that. The first one is fear of losing the one and only source of communication they have, limited though, and the second one is likelihood of something bad happening to their friends. These two likelihoods that are closely connected with one another make Uyghurs in Diaspora quite discreet about their Chinese friends.

Ruşen Abbas, a victim relative, points out that the Chinese outside Uyghur Region are victims of wrong narratives. Abbas who says none of the social media apps commonly used in the world is used in China, and all press-media activities are under absolute control of the state

¹⁸⁰ Daraj. June 25, 2020. How does China sell halal organs extracted from Uyghur Muslim convicts?

¹⁸¹ Interview conducted with Arslan Hidayet on 25.03.2021.

¹⁸² Interview conducted with Mathias Bölinger on March 23, 2021.

points out that the Chinese people in the mainland China are not aware of what is happening.¹⁸³ Prof. Dr. Erkin Sidik, a respected Uyghur scientist who conducts studies on optics at NASA, confirms the finding of Abbas. According to Professor Sidik, the Chinese people living in the mainland China are not aware of the Chinese state's attack on reputation and economy of Uyghurs and, now, directly on existence of the group.¹⁸⁴

Rabigül Hacumuhammed who was a university student at Beijing says that when she mentioned human rights violations in Uyghur region to her Chinese classmates, her friends did not believe in her. Rabigül, who worked as a guide for Chinese tourists in the country where she lived in 2018, tells that she frequently experienced similar situations: "The Chinese tourists were asking me, "why don't you come back to China?" I was telling them about what is happening in Uyghur region. I was telling them about camps and disappearance of my family. They would not believe in me. They would say "How could such a thing be even real?" I told one of those Chinese tourists, "go and see it for yourself, if you do not believe in me!" So, that tourist actually went to Xinjiang. Then, that tourist told me, "I was hardly able to breathe. I came with great enthusiasm, I was preparing myself to tell you, "you are defaming China just because you are abroad", but, now, I understand that this is not the case and I am very sorry." That tourist sends me a message once in a while, asking me "is there anything I can do?"¹⁸⁵

More than a dozen of victim relatives we have talked to are well-educated people. They have all stated that they have no Chinese friend who is in possession of true and up-to-date information about what is happening in Uyghur Autonomous Region without exception.

Being Han Chinese is not sufficient for security of those who have witnessed what is happening and raised their voices. One of the last known examples of this took place, in February 2018, in Shen Yang city, state of Liao Ning, China. A young software developer from Shen Yang, called Li Lin was arrested and sentenced to imprisonment for four years just because he posted what he saw during a visit to his family living in Urumqi on the Chinese social media apps.¹⁸⁶

Clubhouse app that is home to audio chat rooms became the medium in which the Chinese from the mainland China heard about the concentration camps from relatives of victims for the first time. This brought about a ban on use of Clubhouse, like many other Western apps, shortly after that. Gülzire Taşmemet and Abdurahman Satuk, who were among those who told people from the mainland China what is happening in such a short time, point out that when they told the Chinese from the mainland, they were surprised and most of them did not believe in them.¹⁸⁷⁻¹⁸⁸ Jevlan Şirmehmet says that there were some Han Chinese who started crying after hearing what was told at Clubhouse.¹⁸⁹

The second Chinese population is the Chinese living outside mainland China. We observe that the Chinese living in places such as Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore which are intertwined with or so close to China who remain unaffected by the intense disinformation and freedom restrictions within China have an extremely active attitude which supports human rights with

¹⁸³ Interview conducted with Ruşen Abbas on 21.04.2021.

¹⁸⁴ Interview conducted with Erkin Sidik on 01.04.2021.

¹⁸⁵ Interview conducted with Rabigül Hacumuhammed on 23.03.2021.

¹⁸⁶ Radio Free Asia. (2021). Li Lin, residing in Shenyang, has been sentenced to four years in prison for provoking destruction since he released information on Xinjiang that is still on shackles.

¹⁸⁷ Interview conducted with Gülzire Taşmemet on 05.04.2021.

¹⁸⁸ Interview conducted with Abdurahman Satuk on 06.04.2021.

¹⁸⁹ Interview conducted with Jevlan Şirmehmet on 08.04.2021.

regards to what is happening in Uyghur Autonomous Region. It is understood that the Han Chinese living in different regions where authoritativeness of the Communist Party does not reign and who have freedom of information are different from the Chinese in the mainland. Such group is not limited to the periphery of China. All the Chinese living in all countries with freedom of information ranging from Japan, Australia to USA and Europe are included in this group. And, a large part of these people have an attitude against human rights violations. Vicky Xu, a Chinese journalist working in Australia, is a figure blamed for treason in mainland China for raising her voice in view of what is happening. Journalist Xu points out that she is being threatened with her relatives in China for she conducted inquiries on what was done to Uyghurs.¹⁹⁰

The third Chinese population is the Han Chinese who settled in Uyghur Autonomous Region, mostly with the state incentives. They are important actors for they are in the “problematic” region, although they are outnumbered by the other two populations. Part of aforesaid Chinese people are members of systematic and orderly labor associations called Bingtuan which can be considered semi paramilitary. Large and fertile agricultural lands have been allocated by the state to such group. They also act as a civilian police force assisting the police whenever civil commotions break out. Settlement places of Bingtuans had been established outside ancient Uyghur cities. It may be said that they created Chinese ghettos in this respect. Civilian Chinese influx, apart from the workers’ associations, is being directed more and more, directly into Uyghur cities, thanks to intense incentives, in addition to Bingtuans. Such situation leads to tension between Uyghurs the ancient people of the region, and the Chinese made to settle there in a privileged fashion. The group with the largest amount of information on human rights violations taking place in the region, from among all the Chinese, is the immigrant Chinese. Nonetheless, due to the ethnic tension, the one and only Chinese population supporting repressive state policies is the same group of Chinese. Such group corresponds to less than one percent of the world Chinese population of one and a half billion.

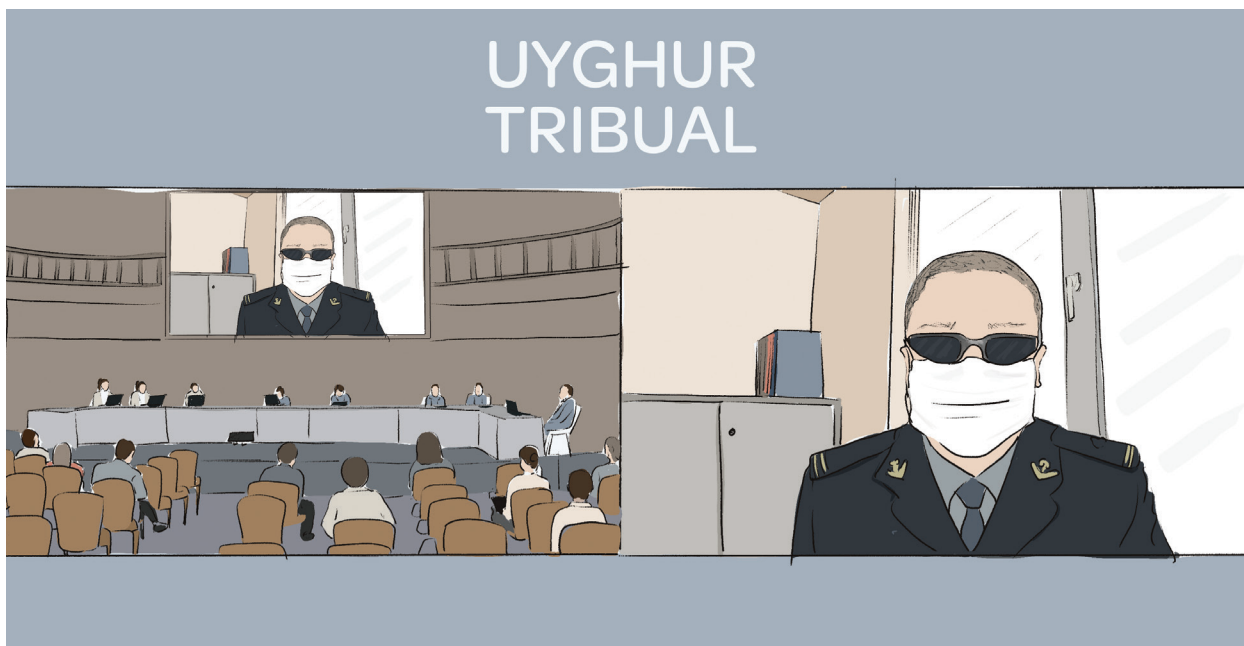
Kalbinur Sedik who shared an incident she experienced at a school where she taught before being forced to work as a teacher at camps shared one experience regarding reflection of ethnic tension on children with us: “There were many children whose parents had been taken to camps at the last school where I worked as a teacher. When they asked me “teacher, aren’t dad and mom going to come back?”, I would say “the state took your dad and mom, they will bring them back.” But, I knew, back then, that most of these children’s dad and mom would not return. The Chinese students overhearing these talks would cheer up and make wishes saying, “That’s very well, I wish that they would take all of you.” When Uyghur students said: “We do act in compliance with laws and why are they doing this”, I would feel so upset. I was not able to say, “they are doing this just because you are Uyghurs.”¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ Deutsche Welle - DW. (2021). Vicky Xu, blamed as a woman traitor for tracking events in Xinjiang, said that she would never back down.

¹⁹¹ Interview conducted with Kalbinur Sedik on 26.03.2021.

10. Camps According to the International Law

In this part of the report, acts executed by the People's Republic of China, in recent years (starting from 2014), within scope of mass detention initiative started in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region will be addressed in terms of genocide crime. The assessment will focus on the international law responsibility of China as a state rather than the criminal responsibility of real person culprits in specific cases.



A former Chinese police officer testified before the Uyghur Tribunal, an independent investigation held in London to inquire into allegations of genocide and crimes against humanity in China's Uyghur Autonomous Region. He detailed the torture of Uighurs in detention centers and camps. (Digitized the real photo.)

I. The Crime of Genocide in the International Law and Responsibility of States Arising out of the Genocide Crime

Ban on genocide is a norm within category of jus cogens (superior law / mandatory rule) binding upon all states in terms of international law without an exception. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, unanimously adopted by the United Nations General Assembly with its resolution dated December 9, 1948 and numbered 260 A (III) clearly provides for that the genocide is a crime according to the international law with confirmation from states that are party to such treaty. The convention obligates states not only to punish the genocide but also to prevent the genocide and is binding upon parties at times of war and peace. Pursuant to the said convention, obligation of the party states for prevention and punishment of the genocide is of erga omnes nature, and is applicable for the entire international society with no limitation of place / country / territory¹⁹². The People's

¹⁹² International Court of Justice. (1996). Bosnia and Herzegovina v Yugoslavia. July 11, 1996. p. 31. Accessed on May 21, 2021.

Republic of China that signed the convention on July 20, 1949, and ratified it on April 18, 1983 has the status of party state¹⁹³.

Article 2 of the Convention entitled “Acts Constituting Genocide” defines the crime of genocide as follows:

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

(a) Killing members of the group;

(b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;

(c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;

(d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;

(e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Within framework of the provision conveyed, the material element of the crime of genocide is acts listed above in five items. The moral element of the crime is committing the said acts with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group (with a special intent / *dolus specialis*): In order for the material element of the crime of genocide to emerge, it will suffice if any one of acts listed in the said article is committed. Therefore, the expression “destruction”, used in the said article to point out the special intent, may not only be construed to mean destruction of the physical existence / killing of group members alone. As per such provision, victim of the crime of genocide is a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. The fact that the national, ethnic, racial or religious group constitutes the majority of the population in the respective geographical region where they live or their economic strength is not important in terms of becoming the victim of the crime of genocide.

Pursuant to article 31 of Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties to which the People’s Republic of China is a party, including the beginning section, the other texts referred to in the text of a treaty are also taken into consideration in interpretation of that treaty¹⁹⁴. The resolution of the United Nations General Assembly dated December 11, 1946 and numbered 96(I), incorporated into the beginning section of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide considered the genocide¹⁹⁵ as denial of “the existence right of an entire human group” The resolution also points out that the genocide pricks the conscience of the humanity, since, along with the human group exposed to genocide, cultural and the other contributions of that group made to the humanity are destroyed, genocide inflicts a great loss on humanity and is contrary to moral rules as well as the spirit and aims of the United Nations. Therefore, activity of legal interpretation as to whether or not the crime of genocide has occurred must be based on the aforesaid perspective of the United

¹⁹³ Although the People’s Republic of China is a party to the convention, it has made a reservation for article 9 regarding the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice. United Nations Treaty Collection. “Status of Treaties. Accessed on May 21, 2021.

¹⁹⁴ Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties. (1980). Accessed on May 21, 2021.

¹⁹⁵ UN General Assembly. (2946). The Crime of Genocide. December 11, 1946, A/RES/96. Accessed on May 21, 2021.

Nations. The International Court of Justice is of the opinion that the Convention intends to secure existence of the whole specific human groups and such intention is the basis and interpretation criterion of all provisions in the Convention¹⁹⁶.

According to the report entitled “Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts” of 2001, as prepared by the International Law Commission, acts constituting the crime of genocide may be, if such crime is committed by persons and entities that have the state organ status as per the law of a state, authorized by the law of a state to exercise part of the government authority or act under order, direction or effective control of state organs, attributed to that state¹⁹⁷.

The State is not a natural person. Therefore, when determining the state’s international law responsibility arising out of the crime of genocide, existence (of the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group) of the special intent that is the moral element of the crime is proven based on objective data such as official statements, policies, strategies and planned practices, not on subjective - psychological cases. For example, the International Court of Justice, in the case of Bosnia Herzegovina / Serbia and Montenegro, sought for objective standards such as sequence of many incidents of atrocity and brutality of similar kind, intended for the same group to the extent making it possible to understand that such incidents are calculated (pattern of atrocities), existence of a general plan or pattern of conduct, rather than psychological states of culprits in individual concrete cases, for existence of a special intent¹⁹⁸.

It is not possible for States to evade their international law responsibility arising out of the crime of genocide by asserting various reasons related to security. Actually, article 1 of the Convention contains the phrase, “whether committed in time of war”, and, therefore, provides for that party states will always be obliged to prevent genocide, punish the genocide and not to commit the crime of genocide. As a matter of fact, the International Court of Justice, in its judicial opinion of Gambia / Myanmar, concluded that the fact that Myanmar army is in an armed conflict with Rakhine State will not constitute a legitimate reason for Myanmar not to fulfill its obligations under the Convention¹⁹⁹.

II. Evaluation of Acts Committed in Uyghur Autonomous Region in terms of the Crime of Genocide and Responsibility of the People’s Republic of China

Acts perpetrated in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in recent years (especially from 2014 onwards) constitute the crime of genocide under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The People’s Republic of China is responsible, as a state, for such crime of genocide committed in respect of the international law. This part contains findings based on concrete evidences that the said acts constitute the crime of genocide and the People’s Republic of China is responsible, as a state, for such crime.

¹⁹⁶ International Court of Justice. (1951). Reservations to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Advisory Opinion). May 28, 1951. p. 12. Accessed on May 21, 2021.

¹⁹⁷ International Law Commission. (2001). Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts. article 4, 5, 7, 8. Accessed on May 21, 2021.

¹⁹⁸ International Court of Justice. (2007). Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro, February 26, 2007. p. 242, p. 373. Accessed on May 21, 2021.

¹⁹⁹ International Court of Justice. (2020). The Gambia v. Myanmar, January 23, 2020. Accessed on May 21, 2021.

A. In Respect of the Material Element of the Crime

In order for the material element of the crime of genocide to emerge, it will suffice if any one of acts listed in article 2 of the Convention is committed. With regards to Uyghurs, it is seen that each and every one of the said acts is being committed individually and systematically by officials of the People's Republic of China.

1. Killing Members of the Group

Based on interviews conducted, it is evidently understood that Uyghurs detained at camps, temporary surveillance centers and prisons (and persons who are members of the other Muslim ethnic groups such as Kazakhs, the Kyrgyz) are sentenced to capital punishment or die as a result of maltreatment or torture. Below are some examples told by victims in person who were detained at camps with regards to the act of killing:

Gülbahar Celilova: "I was seeing people dying because of torture, who never returned and those killed by an injection... When elderly women passed out, we would make them lie down in the empty walking hall, and doctors would come and apply something on their faces, If they did not come round within two to three hours, they would take them away, pulling them on the floor. We thought that they were dead. A young girl aged twenty seven (...) her name was Hürriyet, then, I heard that she was dead. (...) They took that girl to interrogation, she suffered from grave torture, she lost her mind. She was shouting when she came back. They placed a black bag on her head in the midnight and took her. She did not say a word when she returned. They took her to the black room for punishment. When they took me to the doctor one week later for my cardiac disease, I saw corpse of Hürriyet being carried on a stretcher. (...) They would put us on an orange vest at places like the courthouse. We knew that anyone wearing those vests was going to be killed. This is what everybody else thought. They would tell those wearing the vest, "we are going to make an injection to you one month or two months later." They, too, knew that they were going to die."²⁰⁰

Baktiali Nur: "They would take those who had a hard time in staying still for hours and move and torture them. I saw people dropping dead during 15 hours of sitting still (...) I saw another boy. I do not know his name. He was Uyghur, too. That youngster was taken to the hospital from the concentration camp. Upon his return, we saw that his chest had been surgically opened and re-stitched. That boy passed away the next day. Apparently, he underwent a surgery, that is, it was stitched, it looked like part on ribs was completely opened and then re-stitched. We do not know whether or not his organs were stolen, yet he died the next day. He was from Mazar village of Qapqal district."²⁰¹

Abdulhaber Recep: "Many people die in these camps. Those who were taken away and never returned probably died. I had a friend from Lop town, after being beaten, he never returned to the room. We all knew that someone who has not returned after being taken is dead (...) Uyghurs are about to be destroyed. Many Uyghurs lost their lives. We do not know what happened to our relatives and friends."²⁰²

²⁰⁰ Interview conducted with Gülbahar Celilova on 26.04.2021.

²⁰¹ Interview conducted with Baktiali Nur on 10.04.2021.

²⁰² Interview conducted with Abdulhaber Recep on 06.04.2021.

Kalbinur Sedik: “Those taken away for interrogation were unable to come to the class for a whole month. They would not bring back some of the people they took for interrogation. There was a man who used to own a plant. He thought that if he learnt Chinese quickly and memorized songs, they would release him. He was working so hard. They took him, and he never returned. When I asked what had happened to him, they told that he had a cardiac condition, became sick and died. They were saying the same thing for all of them, I saw the corpse of both. Everyone at the camp would be allowed to go to the toilet for three times a day for one minute. They would torture anyone not leaving the toilet at the end of the one minute. It turns out that many of them were being poisoned because of prostate disease and many died because of that. I also witnessed people dying. I came to the camp shortly after it was established. I knew how some people looked at the beginning and I was able to see how they changed (...) When I was unable to see some familiar faces, I would ask about them: the police officers would say “We sent them to labor” or “they were sick and died.” (...) The police officer told me that injections and pills would be administered to women kept there for the purpose of sterilization and causing other diseases. A girl had an adverse impact. Her menstruation did not stop for a month and a half. That poor girl died because of loss of blood.”²⁰³

Ömerbek Ali: “We would presume those taken away for interrogation and not returning in three days dead. We heard that someone called Yusuf Abliz from the adjacent room was brought back dead after interrogation. A nephew of a police official from the city of Karamay was also killed there (...) During food service, there are cells in cells through which only food can pass. That hole was left open, we saw through that hole he was dead”²⁰⁴.

2. Causing Serious Bodily or Mental Harm to Members of the Group;

Based on interviews conducted, it is evidently understood that serious bodily or mental harm is inflicted on Uyghurs detained at camps, temporary surveillance centers and prisons (and persons who are members of the other Muslim ethnic groups such as Kazakhs, the Kyrgyz). Victims being detained are forced to live under inhumane conditions, are exposed to physical and psychological violence, suffer from sexual assault and sexual harassment. Below are main examples told by detained victims in person with regards to bodily or mental harms they suffered from:

Gülbahar Celilova: It was forty of us in a room. Everyone had chain handcuffs and shackles on their hands and feet. There were chains between hands and feet. Two feet and one hand were chained. In a room with a length of five meters, height of six meters, there is a toilet with a length of one meter or one and a half meters. Its width is around three meters. There was an empty space of one meter like a hall on which we could walk to the toilet. The toilet had no door. The bathroom was also there, all of our body was visible when using the toilet, especially young girls were feeling so ashamed. They would allow us to take a shower with cold water for one minute once a month (...) They would give us bread cooked on steam and cold soup prepared by mixing flour with cold water. They would give us only bread for lunch (...) They would give bread and salad juice for dinner (...) They would give us one glass of water per person (...) There was a bed there [interrogation room], but no camera. I was, too, sexually assaulted there. Therefore, I just cannot pull myself back together, I weep whenever I talk about it (...) Two police officers were holding my hands and the other was assaulting me.

²⁰³ Interview conducted with Kalbinur Sedik on 26.04.2021.

²⁰⁴ Interview conducted with Ömerbek Ali on 24.03.2021.

This was happening regularly (...) (...) When I told them, “don’t you have a mother, sister?”, they would reply saying, “you’re an animal, you’re a piece of shit, not a mother or a sister” (...) Everyone from that ward suffered from sexual assault. There is no age difference. I know that everyone suffered from an assault (...) I lost twenty kg in that one year (...) I got gray hair”.²⁰⁵

Tabishan Marubkan: “During my first days at camps, we would sit on metal stools for fourteen to fifteen hours a day. We would just sit there every day for a whole month, they were teaching some sort of military order. It was forbidden to move (...) There were sixteen people sitting in one room. Sleeping, sitting all happened in one room. There was a stool for sitting in the room. For lying down, we were lying down on a concrete place a little higher than the floor. Sixteen people would not fit in there. Those not fitting in would lie down on the floor. The room was twenty sqm large. The toilet was inside the room, too. It had no barriers around it. There was no cabinet, every was seeing it. Nutrition was insufficient (...) Anyone raising his voice, shouting or moving would be tortured (...) Once a week, sixteen of us had to take a bath within twenty minutes in total. There was only one shower head. There was only cold water (...) Many people suffered from deteriorated mental health. Some men were not speaking at all, some had a terrible headache, they were hitting their heads to walls for they had a terrible headache. (...) I became so sick after getting out of the camp. Now, my both kidneys are sick, my face is swelling. I have health problems all over my body, I suffer from many disorders. I had no health problem before being put in the camp. I would not even take an aspirin. Now, I have cardiac disease. My heart aches all the time, it turns out that not enough blood goes to my heart, so little blood goes to my heart. My kidney has accumulated water and my kidneys became sick due to extreme cold. (This is what doctors here say) Besides, my urine has blood. It is disgraceful to say this but I have to say it, due to disorders I have developed there, now, I am not able to have sex with my wife”²⁰⁶.

Baktiali Nur: “There were seven people when I got in the camp. I was the eighth occupant, yet there were twelve people, our number increased. It was ten sqm large. There was no toilet inside the room. They would take us out for toilet, once in the morning and once in evening. We were allowed to go to the toilet only twice a day, no more. They would give us only two minutes (...) They would give us bread, a little rice juice three times a day, i.e. in the morning, at noon and in the evening (...) We would sit on an iron chair motionless for fifteen hours (...) There was a Uyghur boy called Abdusalam, he was taken, when he returned from torture, his both arms were paralyzed. They appointed me as the restroom assistant for that boy. When I asked him “what happened to your arms?”, he said, “they hanged me from my arms to the ceiling, my feet were not touching the ground, when they lowered me four days later, my arms were like this.” When I brought down his pants, his body was all black and rotten. (...) My wrists were broken after I was beaten there (...) After being released from camps, it was found out that I have developed nine different disorders; in my kidneys, lungs, stomach (...) I was being subjected to torture, mental, psychological violence everyday (...) All I wanted was to die as soon as possible, I did not think of anything else, I never imagined salvation. I asked Allah for death as soon as possible, I prayed for death. All I was able to think of was death, death was the thing I wanted the most.”²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Interview conducted with Gülbahar Celilova on 26.04.2021.

²⁰⁶ Interview conducted with Tabishan Marubkan on 15.04.2021.

²⁰⁷ Interview conducted with Baktiali Nur on 10.04.2021.

Abdulhaber Recep: “It was twenty five of us in the room, we would lie down side by side. Five to six people were, from time to time, unable to lie down since we did not fit. They were leaning against the wall and wait standing. There was no place for sitting (...) They would teach us songs in Chinese and would beat us up if there was a single word you memorized wrongly (...) Police officers would come at nine in the morning and beating would start. They were beating us up for fifteen to twenty minutes in turns. They would hit us with batons randomly... We were in chains and unable to escape (...) It was terrible in Hotan (...) it was twenty five of us in a smaller room. Half of us were leaning against the wall and the other half was on the plank. Our hand and feet were chained (...) They would beat women a lot. I would hear women screaming. Based on sounds, I figured that they were using wires to beat them up, women were crying, we were able to hear all that (...) I still have wounds induced by torture on my chest. After I got out, I went to a hospital. I was treated at the hospital for one month. Inflammation was flowing out of my body all the time”²⁰⁸.

Kalbinur Sedik: “For 6 months I taught, people could not take a shower in any way. They only had one minute to use the toilet. They all wore gray clothes. It was something similar to undergarment. It was as thin as nightgown. They had shackles and chains on their hands and feet. They had black shoes, the type of shoes that are so thin that one cannot understand if he is wearing shoes. (...) People had lice all over their body (...) During the class, police officers would storm in and read names of five to six persons and take them away. There was an interrogation room under the classroom. They were interrogating them there, we’d hear their voices. We were able to hear cries, screams. They were being subjected to grave tortures (...) They would not bring back some of the people they took for interrogation (...) They were lying down on the floor. No seats. They sit and face the wall. They see no sunlight. They were not given sufficient food and water (...) All of their faces looked sick. They were in a terrible state (...) They were giving two small pills to people at the camp. They were making an injection to people and taking their blood samples on a regular basis (...) People were getting more and more unconscious. They were merely looking. They had started forgetting their relatives (...) Newcomers had better looking faces whereas people who were there for a while made this clear from their facial expressions and bodies. They were turning into a sick and weak forma (...) I also asked that police office I knew about the sexual harassment. I was hearing some news about it. There were so many Chinese police officers there. They actually wanted to work at the women’s camp because they were raping girls, torturing them by sticking electrified batons into their anuses, mouths and ears. The Chinese police officers were so eager to work at these camps (...) I could not withstand what I saw there while working there any longer, I gulped down all of these, I became sick for I was unable to share that experience with someone (...) I was hospitalized for a while”²⁰⁹.

Ömerbek Ali: “Reactions got more violent since I did not accept slanders, and they started using electrified sticks. I was able to withstand electrified sticks, then they shifted to rubber sticks, I was sitting on a chair, they beat me up on the chair. Then, they lifted me up from the chair and tied me to the ceiling, then, they carried on beating me. (...) After a while, they were torturing with instruments to cause pain on sexual organs and sensitive limbs. Then, they freed me and made me sit and carried on torture by pushing thin metal rods between nail and flesh (...) They would insult while torturing (...) Then, I heard a girl from the adjacent cell screaming. I heard that she was begging “Kill me!” in Uyghur and I felt so sad. Being underestimated and

²⁰⁸ Interview conducted with Abdulhaber Recep on 06.04.2021.

²⁰⁹ Interview conducted with Kalbinur Sedik on 26.04.2021.

being humiliated were the hardest torture for me (...) I had scars, swellings and bruises all over my body. Scars are still with me. My whole body was like rotten meat. (...) I am undergoing psychological treatment, I started feeling terrible again after telling you about all these (...) I weighed 115 kg before the camp, my weight was 60 kg after I got out. This is how much weight I lost in eight months (...) People have lost their mental health there. A brother of our named Dilşat Setuvaldi had a severe renal damage because of beatings during torture, he was unable to walk, he was urinating blood, they even did not treat that man. Another friend called Alim Avud had hemorrhoids and his bowel was out of his body by more than a hand span. Rooms had a toilet inside but toilets had no barriers around them. There was nothing at sides, everyone was able to see. We saw Alim in that condition and they did not even treat him despite of his condition”²¹⁰.

3. Deliberately Inflicting on the Group Conditions of Life Calculated to Bring About its Physical Destruction in Whole or in Part;

Witness testimonies conveyed so far also prove the act of “Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part”. Uyghurs (and the other Muslim groups) are being detained at camps in masses and forced to live under inhumane conditions and large numbers of detainees die.

Many new concentration camps, temporary surveillance centers and prisons have been built around settlement places in the region. The fact that structures used for such purpose have extraordinarily increased in number and, further, transformation of buildings previously used for other public purposes into concentration camps reveal that “new living conditions” in which a significant portion of Uyghurs were going to suffer from physical harm and die have been directly prepared by the state:

Tabishan Marubkan: “Concentration camps were built in a few months when I was being detained there. Tortures got even worse after being transferred to those camps. They had expanded that camp by building it adjacent to the former camp. It had three stories above the ground and one story below the ground. I was taken to the camp in March, and transferred to the newly built camp in October, seven months later”²¹¹.

Baktiali Nur: “Then, they took me to the camp located in my own district (...) That place was a vocational training institution. They also took the Uyghur businessman who built that school and donated it to the state to the concentration camp.”²¹².

Abdulhaber Recep: “I said, “ we have a prison in our city (Hotan), why are we here? They said, “Hotan prison is too packed, therefore, we came here (...) Before 2014, it was only hodjas and pious people who were being arrested, yet, from that time onwards (starting from 2014) people writing for the Uyghur people, be it civil servants or intellectuals, everyone helping Uyghurs were detained (...) Uyghurs are about to be destroyed. Many Uyghurs lost their lives. We do not know what happened to our relatives and friends.”. An officer talked to us when we were in the prison in the district of Hotan. Current situation is not similar to the previous situation. If you do not what I say so, we’ll do whatever we can. We’ll throw you into garbage. Now, things have changed.” said he”²¹³.

²¹⁰ Interview conducted with Ömerbek Ali on 24.03.2021.

²¹¹ Interview conducted with Tabishan Marubkan on 15.04.2021.

²¹² Interview conducted with Baktiali Nur on 10.04.2021.

²¹³ Interview conducted with Abdulhaber Recep on 06.04.2021.

Kalbinur Sedik: “I lectured 97 persons from March 1 to March 21. 90 of them were men, 7 of them were women. Number of people brought to the camp increased after March 21. It went up to 7 to 8 thousand. We could not call anyone by their name when I was there for they were all in the same type of clothing. They were writing numbers on their necks. there were around 8000 people (...) Three months after I started teaching, I asked officials whether not we are going to give them a test. They created registration for test, yet they did not hand out papers to me. That was for show only. So that they could call this an education camp if someone asked. However, this was a pretext. This is entirely a camp for destruction of Uyghurs (...) The women’s concentration camp was a 6-storey building with no balconies. 30 to 40 women were staying in rooms. My prediction for the total number of people kept at the camp is 10 thousand”²¹⁴.

Ömerbek Ali: “When they took me there for the first time most of detainees there were intellectuals, businesspeople and the rich. Then, they started taking well-respected people who received theological education. Then from all walks of life (...) number of people taken to camps increased over the time. There were around 50 people in rooms. When I was there, I heard that they were going to build a new camp nearby, for 15-20 thousand people”²¹⁵.

4. Imposing Measures Intended to Prevent Births within The Group

Apart from the general population policy of the People’s Republic of China, there are very serious evidences showing that practices such as sterilization, placement of IUDs, abortion, administering medicines disrupting the menstrual cycle are being forcibly implemented specifically for the purpose of preventing growth of the Uyghur population. As a matter of fact, as a result of the said forced measures, the population growth rate in the largest provinces of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region dropped by 84 percent from 2015 to 2018²¹⁶. Forcing Uyghur women to have an affair with and marry Han Chinese men within framework of programs such as “cultural exchange” and “sister family” is another action covered by “imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group.” Isolation of millions of Uyghurs within the age range of having children at camps and rendering them infertile due to unhealthy conditions should be evaluated within the same scope. Some witness testimonies regarding the matter are as follows:

Gülbahar Celilova: “They stripped me down in front of everyone. Then, they gave me a urine test. If anyone is pregnant, they had a room there, they were terminating the pregnancy right away (...) They were giving us pills twice a month, they were also administering an injection to us every ten days through the small window at the door, and we did not know if the people administering the injection were doctors. Menstrual bleeding of all women, even young girls, had stopped due to pills administered.”²¹⁷

²¹⁴ Interview conducted with Kalbinur Sedik on 26.04.2021.

²¹⁵ Interview conducted with Ömerbek Ali on 24.03.2021.

²¹⁶ Adrian Zenz. (2020). Sterilizations, IUDs, and Mandatory Birth Control: The CCP’s Campaign to Suppress Uyghur Birthrates in Xinjiang” Jamestown, June 2020 (Update 21 July 21, 2020). p. 2. Accessed on May 21, 2021.

²¹⁷ Interview conducted with Gülbahar Celilova on 26.04.2021.

Tabishan Marubkan: “It is disgraceful to say this but I have to say it, due to disorders I have developed there, now, I am not able to have sex with my wife”²¹⁸.

Abdulhaber Recep: “There is a ban on having children. We have ourselves registered in two different civil registries. The other one was secret (...) If they find out, you have to pay a fine equal to 15,000 Chinese currency. friends who got out in 2016 said that the fine went up to 30,000. For civil servants, the fine is 30,000, for civilians 25,000. After 2016, the fine went up to 80,000”²¹⁹.

Kalbinur Sedik: “At that moment, I saw a police officer I used to know, We whispered and said “let’s meet in the afternoon.” The police officer told me that injections and pills would be administered to women kept there for the purpose of sterilization and causing other diseases. A girl had an adverse impact. Her menstruation did not stop for a month and a half. That poor girl died because of loss of blood (..) Sterilization operation was made compulsory for all women aged 18 to 59. For anyone, whether at camp or outside the camp. The said operation was performed on me in 5th month of 2019. Those girls who did not have this operation were made to marry the Chinese against their will. A woman has to undergo this operation even if she does not have any children. A woman must undergo this operation even if she has a child and doesn’t want to have more children (...) Before I had this operation, there was a line, we had lined up just like sheep waiting to be sacrificed. There were young girls, too, with an age range starting from 18 years of age. The line was so long that I waited for four hours before the operation. There are primary health care centers to which every residence address is assigned, and I had this operation at one of them. I have no idea how women at the camp had this operation. They were being taken to this operation in groups of 50 to 100 persons. An elderly doctor and a nurse performed the operation. They gave me an injection, then, I passed out. I do not know how long it took, it lasted for half an hour or an hour. This operation is absolutely irretrievable”²²⁰.

Ömerbek Ali: “When I was at the camp, a friend of mine called Halim, with whom I worked in Karamay, he was sentenced to imprisonment for five years, I know that someone was sent to his house as part of the sister family. I heard the news from my brother who also works at the municipality. I do not want to share more details on this subject”²²¹.

²¹⁸ Interview conducted with Tabishan Marubkan on 15.04.2021.

²¹⁹ Interview conducted with Abdulhaber Recep on 06.04.2021.

²²⁰ Interview conducted with Kalbinur Sedik on 26.04.2021.

²²¹ Interview conducted with Ömerbek Ali on 24.03.2021.

5. Forcibly Transferring Children of the Group to Another Group

Apart from measures intended to prevent the Uyghur population growth, the People's Republic of China takes Uyghur children from their families and keep them at places such as children protection institution and boarding school controlled by the state. At these places, children are only being subjected to Chinese propaganda education without using Uyghur Turkish and are being deprived of the cultural heritage of their own society²²². Hundreds of thousands of children both of whose mothers and fathers have recently been taken to concentration camps have been transferred to places where they cannot contact their families and separated from their families²²³. Witness and victim testimonies regarding the matter are as follows:

Gülbahar Celilova: "The greatest suffering for me was the women taken from hospitals and brought the day after they give birth to a baby. What happened to that one-day-old baby? Those mothers had breast milk, they would stop the women's breast milk by giving them pills. That was really devastating for me"²²⁴.

Abdulhaber Recep: "They take those children exceeding child number limit (...) A friend of my wife's called me in May 2017. They sentenced my wife to imprisonment for nine years (...) I have not heard from my children. I don't know what happened to them (...) My oldest one is 18 now, the youngest one is 10 now. One daughter, six sons. I have no idea about what happened to my children. I watched videos a lot to check if my children are in them, but I couldn't find them"²²⁵.

Kalbinur Sedik: "Families cannot hear from those brought to camps. The father is not aware of his children's whereabouts and children are not aware of their father's whereabouts, nobody knows (...) At the school where I worked as a teacher, when children whose parents were taken to the camp did not come to the school, they were told to be sent to 'weekly education camps.' We never knew where they were. Those schools were kept strictly confidential. Children with an age range of 6 to 12 years of age were taken. They would send a list when I was a teacher. A list containing names of such children would be sent to the school. When these camps were not around, we would, from time to time, go and check their houses, trying to find out their age and how many siblings they have. I heard about this based what occurred to the children. They were forcibly taking children to camps even if an elder brother and younger brother or sister live together with them in a house or even if their uncle wants to take care of them. I do not know for how long children stay there. Allah knows"²²⁶.

²²² Human Rights Watch. (2019). China Xinjiang Children Separated from Families. September 15, 2019. Accessed on May 21, 2021.

²²³ Adrian Zenz. (2019). Break Their Roots: Evidence for China's Parent-Child Separation Campaign in Xinjiang. Journal of Political Risk.Vol. 7. No. 7. July 2019. Accessed on May 21, 2021.

²²⁴ Interview conducted with Gülbahar Celilova on 26.04.2021.

²²⁵ Interview conducted with Abdulhaber Recep on 06.04.2021.

²²⁶ Interview conducted with Kalbinur Sedik on 26.04.2021.

B. In Respect of Moral Element of the Crime

In order to be able to talk about the crime of genocide, acts constituting the material element of the crime must be taken with the purpose of destroying a “national, ethnic, racial or religious group partially or completely.” All of the victim statements referred to under the previous heading reveal that acts are intended for a certain ethnic group (Muslim people speaking Turkic language, notably, Uyghur living Uyghur Autonomous Region). As a matter of fact, non-Muslim population living in the other parts China or Han Chinese and the Xibe living in the same region are not exposed to such act²²⁷. Criminalizing normal practices of Islam belief such as performing five daily prayers, reading Qoran²²⁸ or destruction of structures with a historical heritage nature pertaining to the Uyghur culture show that such acts are being perpetrated with a special intent²²⁹.

Xi Jinping, the Chinese President, delivered a series of speeches in April 2014, targeting Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, pointing out that a fight was started against terrorism and separatism. Jinping, explaining that separatism is deep-rooted in the Uyghur community in his speeches, mentioned that it digital surveillance over the region’s people and local informants who are to provide information are needed. During such era, Jinping ordered that, with regards to the new policy of People’s Republic of China, weapons of the state be used with no hesitation, no mercy be showed and even if these people (referring to Uyghurs) are released, their “education” and “transformation” be carried on²³⁰. According to several official documents leaked to the media in 2017, Chen Quanguo, Party Secretary of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, in line with speeches and orders of the president, told all the security forces of the region to be prepared for a “grave and destructive” “attack” and gave orders for “collection-detention” of everyone who needs to be “collected-detained” for many times²³¹. In 2017, the state official Yarkent district, part of the region, whose population is almost entirely composed of Uyghurs, (Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party), had given an order such as “wipe them out (...) destroy them” during an outdoor meeting at the

²²⁷ “There is a people called Xibe (a people with Manchu origin). They look like Mongols, yet a nation that is not Muslim, speaks and reads Chinese, and none of them was arrested” Interview conducted with Baktiali Nur on 10.04.2021.

²²⁸ “They asked, “why did you go?” “Did you go to a mosque or speak to people with beard in Kazakhstan”, asked they, and I said, “I do business there, I go there for only one week, my house is there, what can I do ?” They insistently told me to admit the crime (...) After 2013, people attending the mosque saw a dense repression and they stopped going to the mosque for they would be interrogated all the time. Actually, I was not going to the mosque anyway.” Interview conducted with Baktiali Nur on 10.04.2021.

²²⁹ “In 2013, everyone from each and every village who reads Qoran, goes to the mosque, attends the theological schools and performs five daily prayers and respects hodjas were being recorded. Then, arrests started (...) There are twenty large mosques in the city center of Hotan. According to the news we received, only two of them are standing now, the rest of them were demolished (2017 data) (...) Historical mosques were demolished, too. Some of those mosques were 300 to 400 years old. There was the historical Kizikbazar mosque and they demolished it, too.” Interview conducted with Abdulhaber Recep on 06.04.2021.

²³⁰ Austin Ramzy and Chris Buckley. (2019). Absolutely No Mercy: Leaked Files Expose How China Organized Mass Detentions of Muslims. The New York Times. November 16, 2019. Accessed on May 21, 2021.

²³¹ Austin Ramzy and Chris Buckley. (2019). Absolutely No Mercy: Leaked Files Expose How China Organized Mass Detentions of Muslims. The New York Times. November 16, 2019. Accessed on May 21, 2021.

city plaza which public officials and security forces attended²³². The following testimony of a camp victim witness indicates that officials of the People's Republic of China are acting with a different and special intention beyond mere fight with terrorism or assuring the security:

"(...) a civil servant talked to us when we were in the prison in the district of Hotan. Current situation is not similar to the previous situation. If you do not what I say so, we'll do whatever we can. We'll throw you into garbage. Now, things have changed." said he"²³³.

Xi Jinping, President of China, at a conference held on Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region policy, using the expressions "the practice has shown in the new era that the Party's strategy of administering Xinjiang is completely accurate", pointed out that the said new strategy must be carried on in the long term and ordered its audience consisting of party / state officials to adopt implementation of such strategy as a "political mission"²³⁴. The aforesaid explanation embracing all practices, implemented to date, intended to wipe out Uyghurs, as reflected in witness testimonies, was made in September 2020. Timing of the explanation reveals that the new strategy initiated by the head of state in person in 2014 serves a purpose that is far beyond "fight with terrorism" or "assuring security".

Acts constituting the crime of genocide may be, if such crime is committed by persons and entities that have the state organ status as per the law of a state, authorized by the law of a state to exercise part of the government authority or act under order, direction or effective control of state organs, attributed to that state. Policies intended to wipe out Muslim people Turkic language living in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, notably, the Uyghur, are being enforced within a hierarchical and coordinated command-instruction chain, starting from the highest rank of the state. Therefore, attributing the said acts to third parties beyond control of the state or incidental factors, thereby, avoiding international law responsibility of the People's Republic of China is not possible. As a result, acts performed, starting from 2014 in particular, in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region constitute the crime of genocide and the People's Republic of China is directly liable for such crime as a state.

²³² Austin Ramzy and Chris Buckley. (2019). Absolutely No Mercy: Leaked Files Expose How China Organized Mass Detentions of Muslims. The New York Times. November 16, 2019. Accessed on May 21, 2021.

²³³ Interview conducted with Abdulhaber Recep on 06.04.2021.

²³⁴ Chun Han Wong. Xi Says China Will Continue Efforts to Assimilate Muslims in Xinjiang. The Wall Street Journal, September 26, 2020. Accessed on May 21, 2021.

Please also see: Chris Buckley. (2020). Brushing Off Criticism, China's Xi Calls Policies in Xinjiang 'Totally Correct', The New York Times, September 26, 2020. Accessed on May 21, 2021.

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İYİ Parti Genel Merkezi

Mustafa Kemal Mh., 2120. Cd., No:9 Çankaya/Ankara
0312 408 08 08