

# Research Report

Forum: First General Assembly  
Issue: Addressing China's treatment of Uyghur Muslims  
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## Introduction

Since 2014, the Chinese government has detained approximately 1 million Muslims (the majority of whom are Uyghurs) in internment camps without any due legal process, under the supervision of the CCP and its General Secretary Xi Jinping. This is the largest-scale imprisonment of a religious/ethnic minority since the Second World War<sup>1</sup>. Their lack of a trial prior to incarceration is itself a serious violation of their cardinal human rights, but the events and environment within the camps they are sent to consequently to their arrest massively exacerbate the severity of this issue.

Inmates are subjected to a plethora of physical, mental, emotional, and sexual abuses, including the restriction or prohibition of religious expression, forced manual labour, political indoctrination, family separation, and a variety of harmful treatments. Despite the constant and categorical denial of these occurrences on part of the Chinese government, numerous independent NGO's and human rights experts have labelled these activities as ethnocide or cultural genocide.<sup>7</sup>

The act of genocide is not only a breach of basic and universal human rights to life and identity, which must be restored to the Uyghur people, but this also fundamentally undermines international safety and security. It furthermore causes rising tensions between a state as powerful as China and many other world powers that are attempting to involve themselves in the situation to safeguard the Uyghur community, which is seen by the Chinese as interference in internal affairs.



The theme of LmunA 2022 of Emerging Technologies in Shaping Modern Society gives this issue a new aspect: how can we maintain the better uses of technology that have allowed us to investigate this issue, spread awareness and monitor human rights, while exterminating the worse uses of technology within surveillance states, espionage, and the spread of misinformation? As part of the UN charter's Article 1 on solving international problems of humanitarian character and encouraging respect for human rights, it is therefore your role as delegates to guarantee an end to this atrocity and prevent other forms of genocide from manifesting themselves on any scale, in any way, and in any part of the world in future. This research report will give you a basis of knowledge on the origins of this multifaceted issue and how to begin to resolve it.

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## Definitions of key terms

### Uyghurs

Also spelled Uighurs or Uyghurs, they are a Turkic ethnical group originating from Central and Eastern Asia, seen as native to the Xinjiang area in the Northwest of China: the group is largely made up of Muslims and Islam is generally an important part of Uyghur identity: they have been recognised as an official ethnic minority in China as of 1945. Around 10 million people speak the Uyghur language today. After the Dzhungar genocide that occurred after the Qing dynasty overtook Xinjiang, the area is one of the few in China to not have a Han Chinese majority.

### Chinese Communist Party (CCP)

A single ruling party, founded in 1921, governing mainland China. It enforces the single-party state and was historically founded by Mao Zedong on the values of Communism in the period of warlord domination in China: after a Civil War with other political factions such as nationalist, the single-party state as seen today was created and enforced by his later cultural revolution which transformed China to fit the new values of Maoism. The position of general secretary is the highest administrative position that can be occupied within the party.

### People's Republic of China (PRC / PRoC)

The official name for mainland China under the CCP's government, enforced since 1949. It is the most populated country in the world with 1.4 billion people and 55 major recognized ethnic groups. It is currently run under the CCP's full power as a single-party democracy.

### Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR)

A region of mainland China in Central Asia that Uyghurs are recognized as being titular to and they have had a cultural and religious history in this region since before the mid-1700s. It is important for China's trade links to Central Asia and, as one of five disputed but recognized autonomous regions, has a right to govern by the local minority.

### East Turkestan Independence / Islamic Movement (ETIM)

A group or movement seeking the secession of the XUAR from mainland China to form the state of East Turkestan. Seen as "the most militant Uyghur separatists", the political faction has become prominent in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century as a group largely protesting the Chinese authority in the region and proclaiming the desire for Uyghur autonomy.<sup>11</sup>



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### **East Turkestan Liberation Organisation (ETLO)**

An organization comparable to the East Turkestan Independence Movement: it hopes to establish East Turkestan as an independent region and was created in Turkey in the mid-1990s.

### **UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (CPPCG)**

Expanded upon in the past solutions section, it was an UN-drafter document signed unanimously by all Member States defining, detailing, condemning, and setting measures to prevent genocide: despite its effectiveness being disputed, this was a large step for humanitarian rights, also in terms of the protection of ethnic minorities.<sup>2</sup>

### **Xinjiang papers**

Expanded upon in the general overview section, sets of documents and an official report leaked that continued to confirm the Chinese government's atrocious treatment of Uyghur Muslims and the deliberateness with which this was done, making this for most a crime under CPPCG and a human rights infringement in general.

### **September 11, 2001 (9.11)**

A terrorist attack committed by Al-Qaeda including the flight of airplanes into the World Trade Center and twin towers in New York, kickstarting the Obama presidency's "war on terror" and followed by an increase in the undue negative perception of, discrimination towards and racist sentiment towards people of Islamic faith.

### **"Strike Hard" campaigns**

An approach used by the Chinese government especially in autonomous regions to maintain surveillance in the area and suppress, often violently, political unrest or movements for independence. The name derives from the idea that law enforcement authorities were given more power in committing more violent actions if needed to suppress instability and maintain conformity to the CCP.<sup>9</sup>

## **General overview**

### ***The desire for independence & perception of the XUAR***

As with many other states throughout Chinese history, the Xinjiang region is one of many that seeks higher independence and is limited in this pursuit by the central government, as seen with Taiwan and especially Tibet as another recognized autonomous region and after the crushing of the Tibetan Uprising. Xinjiang is officially an autonomous region but is still very subjective to CPP policy and control: autonomous regions are only semi-self-governing and are encouraged to place the interest of the ProC above all else.<sup>5</sup> Throughout Chinese history, violent outbreaks in Xinjiang have happened on separate occasions. Central Chinese administration launched many "strike hard" operations targeted to Xinjiang with the purpose of lowering violence, combating

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crime, and maintaining law and order: as a result, a substantial police presence has been a constant in Xinjiang for decades. The major source of historical conflicts between the Han Chinese government and the Uyghurs is the Chinese government's fear of fomenting Islamic extremist terrorism on its own soil and it is posing a threat to national sovereignty: their fear of terrorism translates to extremist groups and thereby the religion some of them are affiliated to, Islam. Numerous factors have contributed to this.



Xinjiang was connected to Central Asia through road and rail as part of China's economic growth goals, including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan because of its essential position near Central Asia: while these openings are vital for Chinese trade, they previously raised concern that these may expose the XUAR to Islamic terrorist training, gun transfers, and drug trafficking from neighboring nations. Because of the events of September 11th, 2001, China was seen as having greater discretion or freedom in its treatment of the Uyghurs, since their mistreatment seemed more justifiable or acceptable given public sentiment at the time. The Chinese government's broad anti-separatist stance, which can also be observed in its contacts with Taiwan, has resulted in increasing tensions around the East Turkestan Independence Movement and, as a result, greater hatred toward Uyghurs in general as not only their religion and its apparent affiliations, but also their desire to secede as an independent state causes them to clash with the government. China has frequently accused ETIM, or persons inspired by it, for violent acts both inside and outside of Xinjiang and has used the organization's existence to justify the large police presence they retain in the region.

***Xinjiang: a history of political instability***

The Xinjiang region has therefore seen extended periods of instability, as first evidently seen by enormous protests in Baren in 1990, which were followed by violent riots and other demonstrations in places like Yining, Khotan, and Aksu throughout the 1990s. Ismail Yusup, the then-leader of the East Turkestan Islamic Party, had been the leader of the first demonstration, which demanded a halt to the enormous immigration of Han Chinese into Xinjiang - due to the wealth of Xinjiang's natural resources, notably oil and natural gas, and its general economic success due to trade links, this immigration had happened in huge numbers. Throughout 1996,



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the Chinese government responded with a "strike hard" approach, including the violent repression of an Uyghur protest taking place in Yining.

In 2009, more large-scale ethnic riots for independence took place in the provincial capital of Urumqi, with almost 200 people dead as a result of the violence, the majority of whom were Han Chinese. Consequently to this and subsequent episodes of unrest, several additional "strike hard" campaigns were issued, none with a clear aim in sight but more as a government reminder for police to continue maintaining national authority in the region and monitor the area. These campaigns served not only as forerunners, but also as inspiration for the current state of Uyghur treatment, as they often involved the violent crackdown on Uyghur separatists but, as a consequence, Uyghurs in general.

***2013 – onwards***

In 2013, and 2014, violent attacks on pedestrians were blamed on Uyghur separatists in Beijing and Kunming, respectively.<sup>8</sup> In October 2013, a gang of Uyghurs allegedly rammed an SUV into pedestrians in Tiananmen Square, killing five people and injuring 40 more. A knife terror assault in a train station in Yunnan Province in early 2014 resulted in 31 deaths and over 100 injuries: the Chinese authorities immediately issued a statement blaming the attack on Uyghur separatists. This signalled a turning point in China's approach to the governance of Xinjiang. "The government is determined to restrict the rise of religious extremism as well as avoid extreme violent terrorist acts and mass occurrences," said Nur Bekri, the Chairman of the XUAR at the time.



President Xi is claimed to have urged for an all-out "war against terrorism, infiltration, and separatism" in secret internal addresses released by the New York Times. This was the first public statement or hint of "vocational training for individuals more readily misled by religious fanaticism," a clear allusion to camps designed to keep CCP doctrine ingrained in Uyghurs or, at the absolute least, destroy as much of their Islamic belief as possible (as the idea of religion also fundamentally clashed with notions in CCP communism). This system was still in its emergent stages in 2014-15, and had not yet reached its current extent, but following the Kunming assault, the situation with Uyghurs deteriorated. Authorities "criminalised what they labelled 'illegal

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religious' or 'separatist' activities and clamped down on peaceful demonstrations of cultural identity," according to a report issued by Amnesty International in 2013.

Some Xinjiang government agencies forbade Muslim civil personnel from fasting during the holy month of Ramadan as early as July 2014, albeit this was not the first time fasting restrictions had been imposed in Xinjiang. The government had established a massive monitoring surveillance network in the region by 2015: millions of cameras, police checkpoints, tracking software, and bugs were installed around the region, as well as new restrictions on religious freedom. For identification purposes, Uyghur residents were required to submit iris scans, blood samples, DNA samples, and other biometric information to authorities. All of these indicate increased tensions between Uyghurs and the Chinese government and populace, which has led to the prominence of this problem.<sup>13</sup>

***The current situation: continued atrocities, international reactions and the Chinese response***

More than 1 million Uyghurs have been unlawfully jailed in internment camps since 2017. According to government authorities, the camps were established under the Secretary's supervision to ensure adherence to CCP doctrine, prohibit detainees from engaging in ETIM or separatism, combat terrorism, and provide Uyghurs with professional and technical education. They certainly succeeded in enforcing the CCP's ideology in these camps, using techniques such as suppressing any form of Muslim religious practice or expression, indoctrinating inmates with CCP ideology by forcing them to sing Chinese hymns, attend seminars and lectures about CCP ideology, read CCP-issued books or memorise Mao's Little Red Book, or take tests on Chinese ideology to determine whether they will be permitted to leave the camp.<sup>10</sup> The level of indoctrination and suppression of right to identity described by witnesses from these camps is increasingly seen as Orwellian, dystopian, and incredibly alarming.

Other human rights violations reported in the camps include forced labour, physical beatings or torture, forced sterilisation and contraception, forced abortion to avoid the proliferation of the Uyghur ethnicity, verbal harassment, and rape and sexual assault, in addition to the restriction of religious or political speech and expression. Evidence of these has made for a decisive factor in the international consensus that the events are being carried out with genocidal intentions by the Chinese government as many accounts detail the level, atrocity and frequency of the brutalisation of inmates.

The Xinjiang area has witnessed an approximately 50 percent overall decline in birth rates in the XUAR as a result of the Chinese government's efforts, with the primarily Uighur-populated districts of Hotan and Kashgar seeing a decrease in birth rates of over 60 percent between 2015 and 2018. These data were acknowledged by Chinese officials, but claims of non-consensual sterilisation, neonaticide, and infanticide were dismissed, where inmates alleged that these had come due to the Chinese government's desire to exterminate Uyghurs.

China has consistently refused allegations of Uyghur genocide made by numerous countries, including the United States, Canada, and the Netherlands. China has flatly denied all of these claims, claiming instead that the crackdown in Xinjiang is necessary to combat terrorism and



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Islamic extremism. In the run-up to the 2022 Beijing Olympics, the Chinese Foreign Ministry issued a defence statement, claiming that claims of genocide were the "lie of the century," due to the prospect for a boycott based on the findings of the detention camps by participating nations.<sup>3</sup>

*Final proof: the Xinjiang Papers*

The so-branded "Xinjiang Papers" were leaked and released in full by November 2021, after being sent to the Uyghur Tribunal in the United Kingdom in September.<sup>6</sup> Experts confirmed the authenticity of the documents. The Papers revealed that both CCP Secretary General Xi and Premier Li Keqiang had previously made direct remarks that led to policies impacting the Uyghurs, including all the above-mentioned treatment of Uyghurs in detention camps, as well as compulsion to labour in factories. This also included reports of Uyghur women being forcibly sterilised en masse in an attempt to reduce the population. China has been under to significant international criticism as a result of claims of human rights breaches in Xinjiang, and in 2017, a series of news reports from all over the world, including the Wall Street Journal, testified to the rigorous surveillance and camp life that Uyghurs were subjected to through use of i.e. witnesses and drone data. Upon examination from the Chinese government on their remarks, authorities primarily avoided addressing the issue from 2015 until late 2018, when the issue's rising visibility made ignoring it increasingly difficult. The Chinese official indicated during a session of the OHCHR's CERD that claims of concentration camps were "absolutely incorrect" and that the camps were only for perfectly safe and legal vocational training reasons. Many officials, including Foreign Minister Wang Yi, maintained that China's approach was merely in line with the UN's 2016 "Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism." Satellite photographs were presented of a camp in Shufu County that has doubled in size since 2013 when it was first imaged, began to have watchtowers, and dormitories for inmates were created. Inmates reported being coached on what to say to journalists and visitors when asked questions about life and conditions in internment camps to avoid scandal when foreign press came to visit, which provided further evidence against the Chinese government's denial of the camps, or more specifically proof that they had been actively trying to conceal their involvement. The later Xinjiang police files<sup>4</sup> would show even more convincing evidence, in the form of thousands of pictures, inmate ID cards etc, of the Chinese government's actions sparking further international outrage.

*The future of the issue: role of technology and global effects*

The role of technology in having created and played a part in this issue since its inception is a factor that cannot be overlooked, especially in a world that continues to technologically develop and advance at exponential rates. As surveillance, monitoring and tracking technologies improve, so does the potential for the Chinese government to detain more Uyghurs and continually hide their behaviour: conversely, it is the same technology that has allowed for the above data to be gathered and spread to foster campaigns of awareness and millions worldwide being raised for the purpose of aiding Uyghurs. The future of this issue looks prominent on both sides.

The issue also has a massive impact on global politics and international relations: from purely economic and political standpoints, the issue can directly threaten international security as China feeling an interference with its internal affairs has the potential to cause massive geopolitical

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tensions or indirect conflicts between it and other world powers: escalation is possible, and, if the issue is not dealt with carefully and impactfully, imminent.

## **Major parties involved**

### *Amnesty International (+ Uyghur Freedom Organisation)*

Because of its purpose of abolishing all human rights violations, it is directly responsible for terminating the violence and fear created by Chinese discrimination and mistreatment of the Uyghurs. It has published several country-specific publications and explored the causes and methods that allow law enforcement to bias against particular categories of people. "Police brutality and racism are completely prohibited under international human rights law," it adds in its manifesto against police violence: "Law enforcement should not treat people differently based on their color, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity, religion or belief, political or other beliefs, nationality, national or socioeconomic origin, handicap, or other status."

It has published thorough and comprehensive studies on the detention camps, detailing the frequency of torture and the extent to which the Chinese government has gone to conceal human rights violations. All 108 former prisoners questioned by Amnesty International for the study described harsh or humiliating treatment at some point in their stay.

### *Human Rights Watch*

As a non-governmental organization dedicated to human rights research and advocacy, the group has the power to pressure governments, policymakers, and corporations to denounce abuse and enforce the respect for human rights of all Uyghurs, as well as any Muslim minority communities anywhere in the world. It has issued detailed reports and dispatched investigative journalists to the region to learn more about the problem's scope and causes and has been a main information provider over data about the human rights violations in China. It is within its fundamental role to ensure the rights of the Uyghur people are recognized, considered, and never undermined.

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*Democratic People's Republic of China*

China is evidently the primary contributor participating in this issue as the site where all these atrocities occur. Despite the CCP's repeated denials, proof has emerged that these abuses do occur, as evidenced by numbers such as birth rates provided by the CCP and reporting by other publications. Their current emergence as a BRICS country makes it further dependent on foreign trade that may reduce if sanctions are placed on China due to its alleged treatment of the Uyghurs.

*United States of America*

Although the United States' policy on this issue is limited because they are not the perpetrators of the abuses, as another major power, it has the potential to be a more powerful voice in encouraging China to respect human rights, especially given that many of its immediate neighbours are unconcerned about the issue. Individual ETIM terrorists have already been identified by the US, but the ETLO has not been put to its list of terrorist organizations. The Wall Street Journal, the Associated Press, and the New York Times, among others, have testified or reported on the Uyghur camps and the atrocities that occur there, indicating that the US media has had a significant impact in increasing awareness about the issue.<sup>12</sup> The US refusal to classify Uyghurs as terrorist would be symbolic in justifying China's actions as a country that has also openly declared its "war on terrorism". The Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act, as well as other measures used to sanction Chinese firms and powerful individuals can serve as a basis to continue their involvement in the issue.

*Islamic Republic of Pakistan*

China's neighbour and ally that has taken a tougher stance towards the Uyghurs despite the largely Islamic faith of its inhabitants that the groups have in common. Following the 2003 Pakistan-China extradition pact, ETIM's third highest leader, Ismail Kadir, was repatriated to China after being apprehended by Pakistani officials. In November 2003, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf remarked, "This country would never let anybody, even the terrorist force of 'East Turkestan,' utilize Pakistani territory to carry out any type of anti-Chinese actions." Thousands of Uyghurs visit Pakistan each year for commercial and religious reasons, and the Chinese have openly speculated that around 1000 Uyghurs were trained by Osama Bin Laden's troops in Afghanistan, with some sources claiming that Uyghurs were also taught at terrorist training camps in Pakistan.

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### **Timeline of Key Events**

1948	CPPCG document unanimously passed by the UN General Assembly
1955	The region of Xinjiang is granted autonomy and renamed the XUAR <sup>5</sup>
1966	Mao's Cultural Revolution begins: mosques torn down, religious scripts burned
1976	"Reform and Opening" Uyghur rioting leads to large-scale casualties: massacre <sup>9</sup>
1990	Baren armed uprising
1996	Initial "strike hard" campaign spreads through PRC
2001	Large-scale Chinese military exercises in XUAR
2001	9/11 Terrorist attack
2007	Chinese raids & burning of Xinjiang training camp, 19 casualties
2009	Urumqi: Uyghur protests for independence & against discrimination
2013	Attack in Beijing Tiananmen Sq.
2014	Knife assault in Kunming station
2014	CCP's policy of "people's war on terror" initiated
2015	Giant surveillance network put into place in Xinjiang: CCP diverts budget
2017	First arrests of Uyghurs for "religious fanatic behaviour"
2018	Chinese government continually disavows knowledge of concentration camps
2021	Uyghur tribunal receives & releases Xinjiang Papers

### **Previous attempts to solve the issue**

- The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (CPPCG), also called the Genocide Convention, is an international treaty that was signed by 152 states in the United Nations General Assembly as the first official legislation and first human rights document to criminalize genocide (and aim for its prevention) to be passed unanimously. However, after its ratification in 1948, the subsequent occurrences such as the Rwandan genocide in 1994 have proven it to be a less effective document. It was a pact that was brought up in the context of the persecution of Uyghur Muslims, and it was used to argue that the Chinese government should be sanctioned.
- The Office of the State Council produced The National Minorities Policy and Its Practice in China in September of 1999, which outlined the groundwork of a policy involving

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minorities. However, the policy was deliberately made ambiguous, facilitating the uncovering of loopholes. The United Nations also has a Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), where the Uyghur camps were frequently brought up, but China's repeated denials made fruitful debate on these inaccessible. The United States' adoption of the Uyghur Rights Policy Act, as well as sanctions against Chinese firms and individuals in response to the issue – including Chen Quanguo, a key member of the Chinese Politburo – has helped to lay the foundations for future action.

- Many attempts to remedy the issue have been thwarted thus far, initially owing to Chinese denial that the problem occurred in the first place, and later due to a refusal to cooperate in resolving the problem.

## Possible solutions

Within this issue, there can exist both solutions that tackle the specific matter as well as more general solutions that begin to tackle the roots of the problem. A higher priority should be placed on ending the genocide as soon as possible, but more fundamental solutions will help avoid similar issues recurring in future.

The solutions tackling the more general origins of the issue are, for example, to:

- **Provide an international legal framework to ensure human rights are upheld in every country without breaching the national governmental authorities of any Member States.**
  - Certain Member States and especially the delegation of the PRC will have an aversion to letting human rights be monitored within their territory if this is felt to undermine the governmental authority over one's country that any Member State has a right to.
- **Make an overall effort to reduce the dangerous mischaracterization of all Muslims as “terrorists” propagated in today's society** - it is a significant contributing factor in this issue as it partially causes the Chinese mindset that has led to the racial / ethnical discrimination targeting Muslims in particular.
  - This can be done in a multitude of ways such as awareness campaigns, the use of politically correct terminology, the provision of education on various religions and their history, etc.

The solutions that pertain directly to the issue of the Uyghurs in China are as follows:

- **Building a task force, agreement or coalition with the aim of aiding Uyghurs currently in Chinese detainment camps.**



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- This solution encompasses various activities such as removing the Uyghurs from the camps in the first place, providing them with safe refuge or political asylum, reuniting them with their families, providing medical aid and psychotherapy, etc.
- **Economic policy to encourage the Chinese government to cease or drastically alter its treatment of Uyghurs** and its activities in Xinjiang regarding the detention or discrimination of Uyghurs.
- **Aiding or sustaining Uyghurs and Uyghur peace / justice groups or organisations wherever possible, as well as withdrawing support for Chinese companies that involve Uyghur forced labour**
  - National advertisement or support of these groups would increase their visibility, potential to expand and ability to help the issue.

### Further reading

- I. A background of Uyghur History: “Who Are China’s Vanishing Muslims? I History of the Uyghur 1884 – 2021” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=461J-OBbQr4>
- II. A short HBO documentary: “China’s Vanishing Muslims: Undercover in the Most Dystopian Place in the World (Vice News)” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7AYyUqrMuQ>
- III. Documentary on the history of the Chinese issue with the Uyghurs: “China’s Problems with the Uyghurs” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJ3fG-tnzCk>
- IV. The full CPPCG document: [https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocity-crimes/Doc.1\\_Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocity-crimes/Doc.1_Convention_on_the_Prevention_and_Punishment_of_the_Crime_of_Genocide.pdf)
- V. Showing the effect of forced Uyghur labor in everyday society: [https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/apr/09/cotton-slave-labor-uyghur-regi on-china](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/apr/09/cotton-slave-labor-uyghur-regi-on-china)
- VI. Follow these sections: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/uyghurs> <https://uhrp.org/> <https://www.uyghurcongress.org/en/> <https://ufo.ngo/> <https://www.euronews.com/tag/uyghur>
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