



*Keywords: Uyghurs, Inner Mongolians, Tibetans, Unjust Persecution, Forced Population Transfer, Demographic Change, Restriction of Religion/Culture/Expression, Environmental Degradation.*

## 5 *Uyghur, Inner Mongolian and Tibetan People*

### *1. - The Uyghur People -*

The Uyghurs are a Turkic-speaking people of Asia living mainly in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR, also known as East Turkistan) in Western China. According to the latest Chinese census (2000), there are approximately 8.6 million Uyghurs living in XUAR. The Uyghurs of XUAR face human rights abuses nearly identical to those faced by Tibetans, however the international community is much less familiar with their plight. Abuses include arbitrary detention and imprisonment, religious repression, economic and educational discrimination, and the steady eradication of their language and culture from public life and institutions. Using the ruse of religion and increased international sensitivity towards terrorism, Chinese authorities regularly assert all Uyghurs to be Muslim “extremists” and frequently apply the label “terrorist” to their community.

#### **1.1 Persecutions in the Name of the War on Terror**

In recent years, Peoples Republic of China (PRC) officials have manoeuvred to use the concept of terrorism as a justification for their repressive treatment of Uyghurs in XUAR. Chinese Security forces target Uyghurs who express any type of dissent, forming a government campaign to “strike hard” against the “three evil forces” of “separatism, terrorism, and extremism.” Since the events of 11 September 2001, Amnesty International has documented that under this campaign, “tens of thousands of people are reported to have been detained for investigation in the region, and hundreds, possibly thousands, have been charged or sentenced under the Criminal Law; many Uyghurs are believed to have been sentenced to death and executed for alleged “separatist” or “terrorist” offences.”<sup>1</sup> It was reported that in 2005 alone 18.227 individuals were arrested in XUAR for endangering state security, an increase of 25% from the previous year.<sup>2</sup> Uyghurs arrested during “security” sweeps often suffer in government custody<sup>3</sup>, with Amnesty International documenting a number of extremely cruel forms of torture used by PRC authorities.<sup>4</sup>

One of the disturbing trends in the era of the War on terror is the PRC’s use of established networks, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), to create of framework of repatriation of Uyghur dissidents from neighboring states. The extradition of Huseyin Celil, a Canadian citizen and ethnic Uyghur, from Uzbekistan to China in 2006 is one well known example of this trend. During a family visit to Uzbekistan in June 2006 Mr. Celil was arrested and extradited to China despite protest from the Canadian government. He was subsequently denied all access to Canadian consular officials and sentenced to 15 years in prison on charges of terrorism.

Furthermore, in its attempts to silence overseas Uyghur activists Chinese authorities frequently use systematic intimidation, harassment, and persecution against those activists’ families still living in Xinjiang. A classic example is the case of the prominent Uyghur leader and Nobel Peace Prize nominee Ms. Rebiya Kadeer’s family. Since beginning her activism, Ms. Kadeer’s children have been arrested on multiple occasions and her sons Ablikim and Alim are currently serving prison sentences for nine and seven years respectively on erroneous charges of secessionism.

<sup>1</sup> Amnesty International: People’s Republic of China: Uighurs fleeing persecution as China wages its “war on terror”, July 2004, <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engasa170212004>.

<sup>2</sup> South China Morning Post: 18.000 Uyghurs Arrested for ‘Security Threats’ Last Year, 21 January 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Human Rights Watch: 2006 World Report, January 2006, <http://www.hrw.org/wr2k6/wr2006.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Amnesty International: Gross Violations of Human Rights in the Uighur Autonomous Region, 1999, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ASA17/018/1999/en/dom-ASA170181999en.pdf>.



*UNPO strongly urges the government of China to immediately halt its repressive tactics against Uyghurs in XUAR under the guise of combating terrorism, extremism and separatism.*

50 *UNPO calls on China to implement recommendations made by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) in their December 2004 report<sup>5</sup>, including officially defining terminology such as “endangering national security”, “violating the unity and integrity of the state”, etc.*

*UNPO urges Chinese authorities to extend an invitation to the WGAD in order to execute their mandate, including in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.*

## 55 **1.2 The Forceful Transfer of Uyghur Women to Eastern China**

In recent years, the PRC central government has directed all levels of the XUAR government to promote rural and urban migration as a solution to poverty in the region. This transfer policy focuses on southern XUAR, an area populated by a Uyghur majority, where it targets women between the ages of 16 and 25. Reports indicate authorities intimidate the women and their families in order to compel them to relocate, as well as threaten local leaders who do not comply with the policy with removal from their posts. Women who do comply with the transfer are often placed under inhumane working conditions and with employers who do not honor their work contracts. According to PRC statistics, in 2007 an estimated 100.000 people from XUAR were working outside of the Autonomous Region, the significant portion of which was young Uyghur women.<sup>6</sup> Local leaders tout the program as a means of “providing employment opportunities and generating income” for rural Uyghur families<sup>7</sup>; however, reports from these women and interviews with their family members reveal that the financial benefits from the transfers are far less than what is initially promised.<sup>8</sup>

70 *UNPO calls upon Chinese authorities to discontinue its use of forced relocation targeted at Uyghurs and to compensate those women who have been transferred against their will with the option to return to XUAR.*

75 *UNPO urges China to demand employers uphold their employment contracts by providing safe working conditions and fair wages for all labourers, without discrimination on the basis of race, religion or other grounds.*

## **1.3 Demographic Changes**

As young women are being transferred out of Xinjiang, the PRC government continues to support thousands of Han Chinese economic migrants who are flowing into the region in search of jobs. This Han Chinese in-migration has been responsible for dramatic demographic changes that severely threaten Uyghur culture. In 1955 Uyghurs made up 74.7% of the total population of XUAR and Han Chinese accounted for 6.1%.<sup>9</sup> Today Uyghurs make up 45% and Han Chinese 41% of the population, a number that excludes Peoples Liberation Army soldiers - Chinese security forces and much of the migrant population.<sup>10</sup> With this large influx of migrants, the Uyghur language is being pushed out of the public sphere. Furthermore, the changing landscape within Uyghur urban centers threatens the preservation of traditional Uyghur culture and lifestyle.

85 *UNPO urges Chinese authorities to implement programmes aimed at preserving Uyghur language and culture in accordance with Article 4 of the Chinese Constitution, which states “the people of*

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<sup>5</sup> WGAD Report: E/CN.4/2005/6/Add.4

<sup>6</sup> Xinhua Net: Xinjiang's First Group of Female Uyghur Workers Return, April 27, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Kashgar Prefecture Economic News Centre: Xinjiang Kashgar Speeches at the Tianjin Labour Leading Cadres Symposium (Excerpts), April 17, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Radio Free Asia: Revealed Secrets: Real Stories of Uyghur Girls Forced to go to Chinese Provinces—Part I and II, 21 – 22 June 2007.

<sup>9</sup> Toops, Stanely: The Demography of Xinjiang, in *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, ed. S. Fredrick Starr, Amrmonk, NY, 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. and National Bureau of Statistics of China: Department of Population, Social, Science and Technology Statistics.



90 *all nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages, and to preserve or reform their own ways and customs.”*

#### **1.4 The Issue of Religious Freedom**

95 Despite the guarantee of religious freedom under Article 36 of the Chinese Constitution, documents obtained and interviews conducted by Human Rights Watch reveal a multi-tiered system of surveillance, control, and suppression of religious activity aimed at Uyghurs.<sup>11</sup> At its most extreme, peaceful activists who practice their religion in a manner deemed unacceptable by state authorities are arrested, abused, and at times executed. Celebrating religious holidays, studying religious texts, displaying one's religion through personal appearance, and practicing religious ceremonies are strictly forbidden at state schools. The Chinese government has instituted controls over who can be a cleric, what version of the Koran and other religious texts may be used, where religious gatherings may be held, and what may be said on religious occasions. Students and government workers are openly forbidden to fast during the month of Ramadan and are punished with heavy penalties, including expulsion from school and termination from positions. The vast majority of China's Muslims are not permitted to conduct their pilgrimage to Mecca – the so-called Hajj. One of the five pillars of Islam, the Hajj is a fundamental duty for all able-bodied Muslims, but Chinese law operates a de facto selection of candidates to the Hajj on the basis of political beliefs and wealth.<sup>12</sup>

100 *UNPO calls upon the PRC government to fully realize and implement all freedoms and rights set out in its Constitution, including the guarantee of free religious practice.*

105 *UNPO encourages China to extend an invitation to the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief so they may investigate the current status of religious freedoms in China.*

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## **2. - The Inner Mongolian People -**

115 Inner Mongolia was officially recognized in 1947 as the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region (IMAR) under the PRC. The ethnically distinct Inner Mongolians comprise approximately 17% (approx. 4 million people) of the total population of Inner Mongolia, according to the 2000 Chinese census. The Inner Mongolians consist of many diverse Mongolian-speaking groups which are united by their common language, Mongolian. Still today some Mongolians live a nomadic life herding and farming and therefore strongly relying on their wide grasslands. In 1981 the PRC acceded to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), which obliges the PRC in Article 3 (1) “to prevent discrimination based on race, colour or ethnic origin, especially in the fields of civil rights, access to citizenship, education, religion, employment, occupation and housing”. Despite these obligations the Chinese government has consistently discriminated against the ethnic Inner Mongolians, denying them of their fundamental rights which are also enshrined in the Chinese Constitution.

### **2.1 Denial of Language and Culture**

120 Article 10 of China's Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law states that “Autonomous agencies in ethnic autonomous areas guarantee the freedom of the nationalities in these areas to use and develop their own spoken and written languages and their freedom to preserve or reform their own folkways and customs”. Furthermore, Article 47 of the Chinese Constitution ensures all citizens of the PRC “have the freedom to engage in scientific research, literary and artistic creation and other cultural pursuits”.

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<sup>11</sup> Human Rights Watch: Devastating Blows: Religious Repression of Uyghurs in Xinjiang, April 2005, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2005/china0405/index.htm>.

<sup>12</sup> Times Online: Crackdown on protests leaves Muslims without a prayer of joining Haj, 23 November 2007, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/china/article2926471.ece>.



135 The situation of authors in Inner Mongolia is a poignant example of the curtailment of the  
abovementioned freedoms. Mr. Naranbileg, a renowned Inner Mongolian writer, journalist, and  
critic of Chinese policy was placed under house arrest on 23 March 2008. Inner Mongolian writer  
Ms. Huuchinhuu's book "*Silent Rock*" was denied publication in June 2007 and all copies in  
circulation were confiscated. On 18 February 2007 Chinese state security confiscated all books on  
140 Mongolian ethnic identity possessed by the famous Inner Mongolian political activist and writer  
Mr. Muunohai. All these men were actively preserving the Inner Mongolian culture and language  
through their contributions. Furthermore, since 1990 at least 20 Mongolian movies and videos  
have been banned by Chinese authorities.

*UNPO urges the government of the PRC to ensure Inner Mongolians can freely access and publish  
any literary and artistic works concerning the people and culture of Inner Mongolia.*

145 *UNPO calls upon the Chinese government to accept Inner Mongolians as an ethnically distinct  
group.*

## **2.2 Denial of Land**

150 Article 1 (2) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to which PRC  
is a party, states that "*all peoples may, for their own ends, freely dispose of their natural wealth  
and resources [...] In no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence.*" In  
reality Inner Mongolian herders are deprived of their ancestral lands under PRC's policy to halt  
desertification in the region. Since 2008 more than 800.000 herders have been relocated from their  
pastures.<sup>13</sup> The official Xinhua News Agency confirmed in 2002 that 20% of the region's total  
155 grassland faces "livestock herding prohibition".<sup>14</sup> Inner Mongolians are relocated to cities often  
being provided with inadequate housing<sup>15</sup>, thereby forcefully altering their lifestyle and culture.  
Herders that have refused resettlement have had their property including livestock confiscated and  
have been forcefully removed by Chinese police. If herders want to insist on retaining their rights  
to their ancestral land pasture no compensation is granted to them after relocation.

160 UNPO welcomes China's efforts to prevent further desertification and design compensation  
programmes; nevertheless *UNPO urges the government to halt its policy of forceful relocation and  
land confiscation, as well as to allow ethnic Mongolians to pursue their traditional life on their  
ancestral lands.*

165 *UNPO calls upon Chinese authorities to properly provide all voluntarily resettled people,  
including those who wish to retain their land rights, with adequate food, water, shelter, and  
medical services.*

## **2.3 Denial of Freedom of Speech**

170 Article 35 of China's Constitution guarantees that all "*citizens of the People's Republic of China  
enjoy freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association, of procession and of  
demonstration*". In actuality these freedoms are frequently denied to dissenting Inner Mongolians  
by means of oppression, arbitrary arrest and imprisonment. Since December 1995 Mr. Hada, the  
chairman of the Southern Mongolian Democratic Alliance (SMDA) and journalist, has been  
imprisoned on charges of "espionage and separatism". From January to June 2008 Mr. Jaranbayar  
175 Soyoltu, member of the Inner Mongolian People's Party, was detained due to "passport issues".  
Furthermore, in 2007 the PRC has shut down several web sites highlighting Mongolian issues, for  
example popular Mongolian discussion fora like [mglzaluus.com/bbs](http://mglzaluus.com/bbs) and [ehoron.com](http://ehoron.com).

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<sup>13</sup> The Globe and Mail: Mongolian herdsman no longer free to roam, 6 March 2008,  
<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20080306.wmongolia06/BNStory/International/>

<sup>14</sup> Xinhua News Agency: Guanyu xibu shengtai yimin: Shentai yimin ya ying 'zhu shuicao er ju, 29 October 2002,  
[http://news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2002-10/29/content\\_611967.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2002-10/29/content_611967.htm).

<sup>15</sup> South China Net: Project of Immigration or Project of Fooling People?, 1 July 2004,  
[http://news.xinhuanet.com/house/2004-06/21/content\\_1537002.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/house/2004-06/21/content_1537002.htm)



180 *UNPO urges Chinese authorities to halt the ongoing repression of free speech, including allowing websites featuring open discussions about Inner Mongolia to remain online and allowing Inner Mongolian journalists to publish freely.*

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### **3. - The Tibetan People -**

185 The Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) within the PRC was founded in 1965 and currently has an estimated population of 2.6 million people. The Tibetan issue is by far the most well known issue related to China today. Tension over the years between Tibetans and Chinese authorities has steadily been on the rise.

#### **3.1 Demographic Change**

190 Like in other autonomous regions in China, TAR has been strongly affected by China's civilian transfer policy. In recent years an increasing number of Han Chinese have relocated into Tibet, with the inauguration of the Qinghai Tibet railway in July 2006 leading to a steep influx of non-Tibetans. Furthermore, Chinese authorities employ various coercive birth-control measures to stem the growth of Tibetan population. This twin demographic policy is clearly aimed to ensure Tibetans are reduced to an insignificant minority in their region, so as to render any nonviolent resistance against China's rule ineffective.

195 *UNPO calls upon China to halt its oppressive demographic policies in TAR and to implement policies which are instead aimed at preserving Tibetan traditions, culture and identity.*

#### **3.2 Lacking Religious Freedom**

200 The PRC's ignorance of its own freedom of religion principle also includes harsh restrictions of Buddhist practices – the predominate religion in TAR. Thousands of temples and monasteries have been destroyed by Chinese authorities who maintain strict control over those buildings still remaining. A government enforced limit has been placed on the number of religious buildings allowed. These practices further coincide with the consistent persecution and detention of countless monks and nuns.

205 *UNPO calls upon the PRC government to fully realize and implement all freedoms and rights set out in its Constitution, including the guarantee of free religious practice.*

#### **3.3 Environmental Degradation**

210 The negative fallout from overheated economic growth is also being felt by Tibet. There is an overall deterioration of resources such as air, water and soil; the destruction of ecosystems; and the extinction of wildlife. Deforestation has had a serious impact on the fragile mountainous terrain. This had led to erosion and mud slides, thereby threatening the fragile balance and safety of the population. Tibet is rich in uranium, gold, copper, zinc, and other minerals. The aggressive mining of these resources has resulted in severe ecological impacts on the region. Numerous plant and animal species are on the verge of distinction as a result of increased human population in the region, the reduction of forest habitat and a dramatic increase in hunting. During the 1960s and 1970s, nuclear waste from China's primary nuclear weapons research and design facility sited on the Tibetan plateau was disposed of in a haphazard and unregulated way, posing enormous danger to those who lived nearby. Nuclear weapons are deployed in at least three sites on the Tibetan plateau and are believed to number at least several dozen. Due to poor regulations on storage, nuclear waste has seeped into the ground and has thereby polluted important water resources.

220 *UNPO urges China to implement strict environmental laws which ensure the protection and livelihood of the Tibetan Plateau, its peoples and its resources.*

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