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# China: Situation of Uyghurs

COI Compilation

April 2016



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REPUBLIK ÖSTERREICH  
BUNDESMINISTERIUM FÜR INNERES



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ACCORD is co-funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, UNHCR and the Ministry of the Interior, Austria.

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Origin & Asylum Research and Documentation

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This report serves the specific purpose of collating legally relevant information on conditions in countries of origin pertinent to the assessment of claims for asylum. It is not intended to be a general report on human rights conditions. The report is prepared within a specified time frame on the basis of publicly available documents as well as information provided by experts. All sources are cited and fully referenced.

This report is not, and does not purport to be, either exhaustive with regard to conditions in the country surveyed, or conclusive as to the merits of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Every effort has been made to compile information from reliable sources; users should refer to the full text of documents cited and assess the credibility, relevance and timeliness of source material with reference to the specific research concerns arising from individual applications.

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## List of Abbreviations

CCP - Chinese Communist Party, also: CPC - Communist Party of China  
ETIM - East Turkestan Islamic Movement  
ETIP - East Turkistan Islamic Party  
ETIPA - East Turkistan Islamic Party of Allah  
ETLO - East Turkestan Liberation Organisation  
ETPRP - East Turkestan People's Revolutionary Party  
IMU - Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan  
MPS - Ministry of Public Security  
MSS - Ministry of State Security  
NPC - National People's Congress  
PAP(F) - People's Armed Police (Force)  
PCC - Production and Construction Corps  
PLA - People's Liberation Army  
PRC - People's Republic of China  
TIP - Turkestan Islamic Party  
XPCC - Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps  
XUAR - Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

# 1 The Uyghur People

## 1.1 Origins

The ethnic origin of the Uyghur people has been “contested [...] among Uyghur and Chinese scholars, as well as among other scholars of Uyghur history” (Tursun, 2008, p. 92).

In his 2010 book *Uyghurs: Strangers in Their Own Land*, Gardner Bovingdon, an associate professor of Central Asian Studies at Indiana University (USA), includes a detailed discussion of the historical emergence of the Uyghurs. As Bovingdon notes, some “Uyghur nationalists posit that Uyghurs emerged very early, possibly some six thousand years ago” while other “nationalists claim more recent descent from the Xiongnu, a confederation of peoples who engaged in a ‘tug of war’ with the Han dynasty [206 B.C.–220 A.D.] for control of Xinjiang”. However, as Bovingdon points out, “the term Uyghur (variously Weihe, Yuanhe, and Huihe in Chinese sources) is found no earlier than the fifth century”. (Bovingdon, 2010, p. 27)

An entry on the Uyghur people in the Encyclopædia Britannica, a general knowledge encyclopedia currently published in the USA, states that Uyghurs are mentioned in Chinese records dating from the 3rd century A.D. (Encyclopædia Britannica, 9 March 2015).

A Radio Free Asia (RFA) overview of the Uyghurs notes that the name “Uyghur” “first appeared in the Orkhon Kok Turk inscriptions and in early medieval Uyghur, Manichaean, and Sogdian scripts, as well as in Arabic-Persian scripts” (RFA, 9 July 2009).

James Millward, a professor of History at Georgetown University (USA) who is specialised in the history of China and Central Eurasia, writes in his book *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang* (2007) that the Uyghurs originated in the “Mongolian core lands of the Orkhon River valley”. As he notes, the tribes known by the name “Uyghur” were “former components of the Türk khaghanate” and were “not Muslims, but rather Manichaean” (Millward, 2007, pp. 42-43).

As James Millward and Peter Perdue, a professor of History at Yale University (USA), write in an earlier book chapter in Frederick Starr’s *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland* (2004), the Uyghur “[w]ith other tribes, [...] overthrew the Türk ruling house and in 744 established an empire of their own based in central Mongolia that eventually extended into northwest China, Zungharia, and at times as far west as the Fergana valley” (Millward/Perdue, 2004, p. 40).

In 840, this Uyghur empire (khaghanate) was in turn destroyed by what Millward refers to as a “massive attack by the Kyrgyz (Qirghiz)” (Millward, 2007, p. 46). This resulted in the emigration of many subjects of the former Uyghur empire into Gansu and Xinjiang. Thus, as Bovingdon notes, “only in the ninth century did peoples bearing the collective name Uyghur settle in the Tarim Basin” (Bovingdon, 2010, p. 27). As Millward notes, the main group of Uyghur tribes of the former Uyghur empire “resettled in lands straddling the Tian Shan” in today’s Xinjiang area (Millward/Perdue, 2004, p. 40) and established “a state centred on

Beshbaliq as their winter capital [...] and Qocho as their summer capital” (Millward, 2007, p. 46).

An Archaeology magazine article by the Canadian non-fiction journalist Heather Pringle quotes the US sinologist Victor Mair as noting with reference to ancient Uyghur inscriptions and other historical documents that “the Uyghurs entered the Tarim Basin relatively late, after their powerful khanate in Mongolia fell in A.D. 840”. (Pringle, July/August 2010; see also Bovingdon, 2010, p. 27)

Millward writes that to the west of the Uyghur state, “a new confederation emerged in the ninth century from the welter of Qarluq, Yaghma and other Türkic tribes driven west by the rise and fall of the Orkhon Uyghur state”. These Turkic tribes “ultimately formed an empire in Kashgaria, Semirech’e and Transoxiana, and are known to modern scholars as the Qarakhanid dynasty” (Millward, 2007, p. 50). As Millward and Perdue note, the Qarakhanids “linked the western Tarim basin to the Islamic world of Transoxiana and parts west and it was under their rule that “the Turks and much of Xinjiang’s population became Muslims”. The same authors state that “[w]hile the modern Uyghur people take their name from the Uyghur empire and Khocho state (Uyghuristan), they trace their religion to the [Q]arakhanids” (Millward/Perdue, 2004, p. 42).

Bovingdon notes a “gradual disappearance” of the name Uyghur as the Qarakhanid Empire expanded into the Tarim Basin and its population became Islamicized:

“[W]hen the Qarakhanid Empire moved south into the Tarim and began to Islamicize the predominantly Buddhist Uyghur population, it set in motion the gradual disappearance of the name Uyghur, along with the Buddhist religion, until, by the fifteenth century, there were no recorded usages in the region.” (Bovingdon, 2010, pp. 27-28)

As Nick Holdstock, a British writer of fiction and non-fiction books, notes in his 2015 book *China’s Forgotten People*, points out, “the peoples the term originally referred to have little or nothing in common with Uyghurs in the modern era” and that “there were [...] centuries when no such identity existed” (Holdstock, 2015, p. 16). The Encyclopædia Britannica notes that “[t]he Uyghurs have lacked political unity in recent centuries, except for a brief period during the 19th century when they were in revolt against Beijing” (Encyclopædia Britannica, 9 March 2015).

Bovingdon notes that the name Uyghur “reappeared in popular discourse only in the twentieth century” although some scholars provided evidence that the name had already been “in wide use” by Turkic speakers in Xinjiang in the late nineteenth century:

“The name Uyghur reappeared in popular discourse only in the twentieth century. Some scholars have argued that it was a Soviet conference in Tashkent in 1921 that led Turkic in Xinjiang to adopt the name. Soviet officials had revived the historical term Uyghur when they divided Turkic-speaking Central Asians into various ‘national’ groups to ward off the threat of a Pan-Turkist revolt. The strategic adoption of the name after centuries of disuse and as a result of government policies strikes some as prima facie evidence of

national invention (Gladney 1990; Rudelson 1997). Several scholars have subsequently challenged this argument, however, providing evidence that the name had already been in wide use by Turkis in the late nineteenth century (Brophy 2005; Nābijan Tursun 2008).” (Bovingdon, 2010, p. 28)

The same source goes on to discuss official Chinese historiography which aims to represent Uyghurs as a “component part of the history of the multinational ‘Chinese nation’ (zhonghua minzu)”, stating that “[i]n asserting that Uyghurs had never separated from the ‘Chinese nation’ in the past”, official Chinese historians “sought to demonstrate that they could never do so in the future.” (Bovingdon, 2010, p. 28)

Justin Rudelson, a social anthropologist and adjunct professor at Southern Methodist University (USA), and William Jankowiak, a professor at the University of Nevada’s Department of Anthropology, state that after the “Uyghurs converted to Islam in the fifteenth century, the term ‘Uyghur’ fell into a disuse that lasted into the twentieth century”. The authors discuss the modern use of the term “Uyghur” as follows:

“The Uyghur conceptual construct that was developed then emphasized the comparative homogeneity and timeless qualities of the Xinjiang Turkic oasis dwellers. This conceptualization of ethnicity redefined the Turkic Muslim oasis dwellers as ‘Uyghur’, the first time the ethnic term was used since 1450. While the inclusive definition quickly made the term ‘Uyghur’ readily acceptable to the majority of Xinjiang’s Turkic population, it did not provide a strong identity. In fact, it is likely that the Chinese nationalists and Soviets both realized that such an identity had so many cracks and fissures that the newly self-defined Uyghurs would be easy to control. Because the new ethnic identity was defined in opposition to all dissimilar cultural and linguistic groups, the label ‘Uyghur’ provided a good rallying point. Roughly 95 percent of the indigenous inhabitants were redefined as Uyghurs, and most accepted the term ‘Uyghur’ as representing their perceived ethnicity.” (Rudelson/ Jankowiak, 2004, pp. 302-303)

## 1.2 Population

As Dolkun Kamberi, cultural anthropologist and director of Radio Free Asia’s (RFA) Uyghur language service, indicates in a May 2005 academic paper, the “vast majority” of native Uyghur speakers in China “lives in the [Xinjiang] Uyghur Autonomous Region” (Kamberi, May 2005, p. 9).

Zuliyati Simayi, a sociologist and professor at Xinjiang University, writes in a book chapter in James Leibold and Yangbin Chen’s edited volume *Minority Education in China* that “Xinjiang is a diverse multiethnic region, with the Uyghur and Han people constituting the majority of its population”. Zuliyati notes that “the Uyghur population is mainly concentrated in the areas of Hotan, Kashgar, Aksu, and Kizilsu in southern Xinjiang and also in the Turpan area of eastern Xinjiang” (Simayi, 2014, p. 132). As regards demographic ratios of Han versus non-Han populations in different parts of Xinjiang, the same author notes:

“Of Xinjiang’s fifteen prefectures, eight have Han populations that account for more than half of the total population. In contrast, the three prefectures of Hotan, Kashgar, and



Kizilsu in southern Xinjiang have Han populations that are less than 10 percent of the local population.” (Simayi, 2014, p. 132)

As noted in an October 2014 BBC territory profile, the Uyghurs constitute the largest ethnic group in Xinjiang (BBC News, 14 October 2014).

The Encyclopædia Britannica states that Uyghurs “live for the most part in northwestern China, in the Uygur Autonomous Region of Xinjiang” while “a small number live in the Central Asian republics”, indicating that “[t]here were some 10,000,000 Uighurs in China and at least a combined total of 300,000 in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan in the early 21st century” (Encyclopædia Britannica, 9 March 2015).

In his 2015 book *China’s spatial (Dis)integration : political economy of the interethnic unrest in Xinjiang*, Rongxing Guo, professor and head of the Regional Economics Committee, Regional Science Association of China (RSAC) at Peking University (China), refers to data from China’s Fifth and Sixth National Population Censuses (conducted in 2000 and 2010 respectively) as indicating that “Uyghurs have been found in all of China’s 31 provinces, and they have stronger interprovincial links in 2010 than 2000”. (Guo, 2015, p. 111)

The 2016 web edition of Ethnologue, a publication owned by SIL International, a US-based Christian non-profit organisation which provides profiles of languages and dialects used worldwide, states that according to a 2010 census, the Uyghur-speaking population in China is 10,100,000. This figure includes some monolingual speakers. The number of total users of Uyghur in all countries is indicated as being 10,389,840. Ethnologue indicates that Uyghur speakers are located in “many separate enclaves” in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) and in “northernmost Gansu Province, [where there is a] border enclave on [the] Mongolia border”, adding that Uyghur may also be “scattered in other Chinese provinces and regions” (Ethnologue, 2016).

### 1.3 Language

Sources note that the Uyghur use a Turkic language (e.g. BBC News, 14 October 2014; RFA, 9 July 2009; Ethnologue, 2016).

As Radio Free Asia (RFA) notes in a July 2009 overview, “[m]odern Uyghur belongs to the Ural-Altaic language family, a Turkic language group of the eastern branch”. While it has historically used a number of different writing systems, Uyghurs today use a writing system based on the Arabic script. (RFA, 9 July 2009)

Ethnologue states that there are “[m]inor dialect differences” between the Uyghur spoken in China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan”. These differences are “overwhelmingly” found in loan vocabulary (Ethnologue, 2016).

With regard to dialects of the Uyghur language, Ethnologue distinguishes between “Central Uyghur, Southern Uyghur (Hetian, Hotan), Lopnur (Luobu), Aqto Turkmen, [and] Dolan.” As Ethnologue specifies, “Central Uyghur comprises the varieties [spoken] immediately north

and south of the Tianshan mountains” including in the areas of Ili, Urumqi, Turfan, Hami/Kumul, Aksu, Karashar, Kuqa. In addition, Kashgar, Yarkand (Shache) and Yengisar are also considered part of the geographic range where Central Uyghur is used. The same source indicates that Southern Uyghur is spoken in Hotan (Hetian), Keriya (Yutian), and Charchan (Qiemo). The same source notes that “[m]odern standard Uyghur currently encompasses a number of local Turkic varieties whose linguistic affiliations are contested”, including Aynu (Eynu) (referred to as a “southern Uyghur variety whose lexifier language is partly Persian”), Aqto Türkmen (a “Turkmen-inflected variety” used in the villages of Kösarap and Oytak in Aqto county), and Dolan (a “slightly Mongol-inflected” variety spoken in the Taklamakan desert). (Ethnologue, 2016)

According to the May 2005 academic paper by Kamberi, Uyghur is closely related to Uzbek. As Kameberi further notes, “[m]odern Uyghur has two major dialects, southern and northern” (Kamberi, May 2005, p. 9).

Michael Dillon, an independent scholar and former lecturer in Modern Chinese History at Durham University (UK), notes in his book *Xinjiang – China’s Muslim Far Northwest* (2004):

“The Uyghur language belongs to the eastern or Altay branch of the Turkic family and is therefore related to Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Turkmen, distantly to the Turkish of Turkey and, most closely, to Uzbek. It is in fact so close to Uzbek that many native Uyghur speakers take the view that the two languages are virtually identical, if allowance is made for the variation between dialects of the two languages.” (Dillon, 2004, p. 25)

The same author notes that since 1980, Uyghur formally uses a writing system that is “essentially a modified Persian-Arabic script [...] with additional diacritical marks for the complex vowel system” (Dillon, 2004, p. 27).

In a 2012 journal article, Ablimit Baki, a senior language tutor of Chinese at the University of Manchester (UK) notes that “Uyghur is the language spoken mainly by Uyghurs as their native language”. Baki states that “[f]or the overwhelming majority of the Uyghurs, Chinese is a second language” that is “acquired [...] at school and in the community” (Baki, 2012, p. 45).

According to Dillon (2004), there is “a serious language barrier” between Xinjiang’s Uyghur and Han communities”, with “[y]ounger Uyghurs [...] more likely to be able to speak Chinese than older people and women possibly more so than men” (Dillon, 2004, p. 26).

Baki provides the following details on the prevalence of bilingualism among Uyghurs in Xinjiang:

“More Uyghurs in the north are likely to be bilinguals compared to fewer Uyghurs in the south who are bilingual. In urban Xinjiang, only 20% of the population is Uyghur, while in rural Xinjiang, more than 80% of the population is Uyghur (Ma 2003: 128). As a result of this distribution, the Uyghur community in urban Xinjiang may attain a certain level of proficiency in Putonghua [Standard Mandarin Chinese] while the vast Uyghur community

in rural Xinjiang manages no more than a few simple phrases of Chinese (Hess 2009: 412).” (Baki, 2012, p. 48)

## 1.4 Religion

A September 2014 BBC News article states that “[m]ost Uighurs are Muslim” and that “Islam is an important part of their life and identity” (BBC News, 26 September 2014a).

In a book chapter in Frederick Starr’s *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland* (2004), Graham E. Fuller, a former CIA official and senior political analyst at RAND Corporation who is currently an adjunct professor of history at Simon Fraser University (USA), and Jonathan N. Lipman, a professor of History at Mount Holyoke College (USA), provide the following historical overview of Islam in Xinjiang:

“Islam entered Xinjiang from Central Asia in the tenth century, and by the mid-fifteenth century the Turkic speakers of the Tarim basin oases, all the way to Hami, had almost universally converted to Islam. Since then, the oases of the south have remained overwhelmingly Muslim (until the late twentieth century), while the northern cities developed into multicultural centers only under the Qing and Republican governments (the eighteenth to the twentieth century). The Kazaks of the Zungharian basin and the Kyrgyz of the various mountain ranges also converted to Islam.” (Fuller/Lipman, 2004, p. 326)

The same authors comment on Islamic religious practice among Uyghurs in Xinjiang:

“Every Uyghur village and neighbourhood has a local mosque, and, as is usually the case in Muslim societies, older men respond most consistently to the call to prayer. [...]

Outside of city centers, in suburbs and villages, one sees young men at work, alone or in small groups, taking breaks to pray at the proper times [...].

Other Islamic practices continue to be followed by most Uyghurs. [...] Some Uyghurs refuse to eat food prepared by non-Muslims, or even by [Muslim] Hui, on the grounds that they are ignorant of the Islamic dietary rules. Others have adapted to Chinese society even to the extent of eating forbidden foods on occasion, when etiquette requires participation in a non-Muslim banquet of meal, and alcohol consumption among Uyghurs has become a major social problem, despite Islam’s strict prohibition.” (Fuller/Lipman, 2004, pp. 336-337)

According to a 2014 article by James Millward that appeared in the *Los Angeles Review of books*, Uyghur affinity to Islam can be expressed in a variety of forms:

“Uyghurs are mostly Muslims, but their individual expression of this affinity takes varied forms: for some it is a secularized cultural identity; others practice in a traditional Sufi manner involving shrine pilgrimages, music, and chanting; and more recently some have gravitated to Islamist ideology that condemns Sufism and condones political violence.” (Millward, 28 May 2014)

In his 2015 book *China's Forgotten People*, Nick Holdstock discusses Sunni Islamic and other spiritual influences on Uyghurs:

“In press reports and articles that feature Uyghurs the main fact supplied about them is that they are Sunni Muslims. Though accurate, this statement needs to be qualified. Both the degree of religious belief and participation vary greatly among Uyghurs, to the point that for some Uyghurs the notion of being ‘Muslim’ is more a cultural marker than a description of faith. This is not to downplay the importance of Islam to many Uyghurs’ sense of identity but just to acknowledge the diverse ways in which this is expressed. Some Uyghurs’ religious observance is limited to eating only halal food, while others go to Friday prayers and fast during Ramadan. Some attend prayers at the mosque times a day, never smoke or drink, go on the hadj and donate money to Islamic charities. All of them would consider themselves Muslims (if not necessarily approve of each other).

One might even argue that to say that Uyghurs are ‘Muslim’ isn’t to say much. It certainly isn’t very revealing about their actual religious beliefs and practices. Most Uyghurs follow the Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence (which permits prayer in a non-Arabic language), but the complex interplay of spiritual influences that have passed through Xinjiang during its history means that many Uyghur beliefs and customs (such as mazar) are leavened with influences from Sufism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and shamanism. The relative importance of these for different Uyghur communities tends to vary between regions – in the west of Xinjiang, shamanic influences from Central Asia have been stronger, while in the south Buddhist practices from India have had more of an influence. Though pre-Islamic influences came first, actual spiritual practice for many Uyghurs, especially in the countryside, is a hybrid of orthodox Islamic customs and these older traditions.” (Holdstock, 2015, pp. 11-12)

### 1.5 Relationship with the Chinese government

James Millward and Peter Perdue write in their chapter in Starr’s 2004 book *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland* that “[o]ver a period of 2,000 years, the Tarim Basin was contested by a long succession of imperial powers based in Zungharia/Semirechye, China, or Tibet” (Millward/Perdue, 2004, p. 56).

In a journal article published in December 2009, Adila Erkin, an author on whom no further details could be found, notes that “Uyghur identity is not merely identified through ‘cultural markers such as religion or language’” but that they have also “maintained a strong identity stemming from their ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic difference from the majority Han Chinese”. As Erkin states, Uyghurs’ “collective sense of ethnic identity and difference has often led to cultural clashes amongst ethnic minorities and the Han Chinese in Xinjiang”. (Erkin, December 2009, p. 418)

With regard to more recent times, the same author states that “Uyghurs have preserved their distinctive cultural identity as a form of resistance against the strong presence of the Chinese military and Beijing’s hard-power responses to ‘separatist’ activities in Xinjiang” (Erkin Adila, December 2009, p. 419).

James Millward and Peter Perdue describe a first conquest of Xinjiang by the Qing empire [which ruled China from 1644 to 1912] in the mid-eighteenth century:

“From our perspective in the twenty-first century, however, the Qing empire appears to have started something more permanent. By first establishing military and civil administrations and then promoting immigration and agricultural settlements, it went far toward ensuring the continued presence of China-based power in the region. It made sure that settlers, voluntary or involuntary, supported themselves under state supervision, and it worked to strengthen commercial links between Xinjiang and the Chinese interior.” (Millward/Perdue, 2004, p. 56)

“Following the 1862 Chinese Muslim uprisings in Shaanxi, Gansu, and Qinghai, Chinese and Turkic Muslims across Xinjiang revolted in 1864, cutting the region off from Qing control. Yaqub Beg, a warlord from Kokand, moved into the resulting power vacuum with his own occupying force. He succeeded in imposing his rule over the local population and creating an emirate centred in Kashgar that embraced the Tarim basin. By 1872, he managed to subjugate a new Chinese Muslim regime in Urumchi and Mongols in Korla. [...]

In the late 1870s, armies under the command of the scholar-general Zuo Zongtang repressed the Chinese Muslim uprisings. After Yaqub Beg died and his regime crumbled in fratricidal succession struggles, Zuo’s force retook the Tarim basin with little opposition.” (Millward/Perdue, 2004, p. 62)

James Millward and Nabijan Tursun, an independent scholar affiliated with Radio Free Asia’s (RFA) Uyghur language service, write in a book chapter in Starr’s *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland* (2004):

“In the 1870s, through an effective deployment of military and diplomatic means that rather surprised Russian and the Western powers, the Qing conquered Xinjiang for a second time. By 1884, when Xinjiang became a province, several things had changed since the first conquest a century earlier. The steppe was enclosed, and Inner Asia’s tribal peoples were now mostly subjects of either the Russian or Qing empires.” (Millward/Tursun, 2004, p. 63)

As a July 2009 RFA article notes, Xinjiang means “new territory” or “new frontier” in Mandarin Chinese (RFA, 9 July 2009).

Millward and Tursun go on to write that Xinjiang, unlike Mongolia and Tibet, “did not declare independence from China when the Qing dynasty fell in 1911”. Meanwhile, as the same authors note, “[a]ttitudes and concepts regarding ethnic, national, and political identity were changing quickly” due in large part to “new Islamic education policies and contact with Turkic and Islamic modernizing movements abroad”. (Millward/Tursun, 2004, p. 72)

As RFA notes in its July 2009 article, Xinjiang’s “Uyghurs twice declared independent Eastern Turkestan Republics in 1933 and 1944” (RFA, 9 July 2009).

A brief overview of the First and Second East Turkistan Republics is provided in a May 2012 “Backgrounder” publication of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), a US think tank specializing in foreign policy and international affairs:

“Since the collapse of the Qing Dynasty in 1912, Xinjiang has enjoyed varying degrees of autonomy. Turkic rebels in Xinjiang declared independence in October 1933 and created the Islamic Republic of East Turkistan (also known as the Republic of Uighuristan or the First East Turkistan Republic). The following year, the Republic of China reabsorbed the region. In 1944, factions within Xinjiang again declared independence, this time under the auspices of the Soviet Union, and created the Second East Turkistan Republic.” (CFR, 29 May 2012)

As RFA states, “China took control of the region in 1949” and subsequently “renamed it the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region [XUAR] in 1955” (RFA, 9 July 2009).

J. Todd Reed and Diana Raschke note in their 2010 book *The ETIM: China's Islamic Militants and the Global Terrorist Threat*, that “many Uyghur activists refuse to call the territory the XUAR or even just ‘Xinjiang’ because they consider the term a relic of Chinese imperialism”, adding that “[t]hose who refuse to use ‘Xinjiang’ and ‘XUAR’ typically refer to roughly the same territory as either ‘East Turkistan’ or ‘Uyghuristan’.” (Reed/Raschke, 2010, p. 12)

A September 2014 BBC News article notes that “many say that ethnic tensions caused by economic and cultural factors” are the “root cause” of violence in recent years (BBC News, 26 September 2014a).

In an academic journal article published in 2003, Rémi Castets, lecturer at Bordeaux Montaigne University (France), provides an overview of Uyghur-Han relations from the 1950s onwards. As Castets explains “[f]rom the 1950s onwards, the communist regime encouraged the settlement of Han population centres” in Xinjiang “in order to secure, control and exploit” the region and its resources. The author notes that this “[c]olonisation and its socio-economic consequences” are disliked by the Uyghurs and are the “main grievance among the protest movements”. (Castets, 2003)

Similarly, Dillon states in his book *Xinjiang – China's Muslim Far Northwest* (2004) that “[t]he issue that has provoked the most intense hostility among the Uyghurs and other non-Chinese of Xinjiang is the encouragement of Han Chinese immigration, which is seen as a way of diluting local culture and ensuring Beijing's control” (Dillon, 2004, p. 75).

Minority Rights Group International (MRG) states in its July 2015 *State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples* report:

„In the wake of new regulations in Xinjiang that went into effect in January 2015, prohibiting the spread of religious propaganda online or clothing with religious messages that could promote extremism, a Uyghur man was reportedly sentenced in March 2015 to six years' imprisonment for growing a beard and ‘inciting’ his wife, who also received a two-year sentence, to wear a burqa. [...]

Ongoing labour migration of ethnic Han into Xinjiang, particularly to urban areas in the north of the region such as Urumqi, has been another source of conflict. This has often occurred through the state-sponsored creation of new towns and cities populated predominantly by Han, often near areas seen as separatist hotspots.” (MRG, 2 July 2015, p. 186)

James Millward notes in a 2014 article for the Los Angeles Review of Books that “Xinjiang’s rapid development in recent years has brought many more Han to the region, [...] relations between native Uyghurs and these millions of newcomers [grew] more and more strained” and that there is a “broad perception that Uyghurs enjoy less access to economic opportunities than Han”. (Millward, 28 May 2014)

With regard to the same issue, an April 2014 BBC News article states:

“Xinjiang has received huge state investment in industrial and energy projects, and Beijing has been keen to highlight these as major steps forward. But many Uighurs complain that the Han are taking their jobs, and that their farmland has been confiscated for redevelopment.” (BBC News, 30 April 2014)

The same BBC News article quotes activists as saying that the government has gradually restricted Uyghurs’ activities in the religious, commercial and cultural spheres (BBC News, 30 April 2014)

Another BBC News article, published in March 2014, quotes Michael Dillon as saying that it is “the general colonial attitude of Han Chinese officials to Uighurs that generates huge resentment” (BBC News, 3 March 2014).

A New York Times (NYT) article published in January 2016 mentions other measures that “contribute to the widespread perception that Uighur identity is under siege”, such as schools which have “largely switched to Mandarin as the main language of instruction instead of Uighur”, or the offering of cash and housing subsidies by the government “to encourage intermarriage between Uighurs and Hans”. (NYT, 2 January 2016)

With regard to formation of Uyghur resistance movements since the establishment of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, Dillon (2004) writes that a group referred to as “[t]he East Turkestan People’s Revolutionary Party (ETPRP), considered by Chinese researchers to have been the single largest resistance organisation in Xinjiang since 1949, was founded in 1967 or 1968” in Xinjiang as a clandestine group. As the author explains, the party was “originally called the Uyghurstan Peoples’ Party but changed its name to echo that of the Eastern Turkestan Republic which ruled parts of Xinjiang between 1944 and 1949” – also with a view to making its name more inclusive with respect to the Kazakh and Kyrgyz population living in the region. (Dillon, 2004, p. 57)

Castets describes the founding of the ETPRP (to which he refers as the Eastern Turkistan People’s Party (ETPP) (Sharki Turkistan Halk Partisi)), as a political organisation with a pan-Turkist agenda that enjoyed the support of the Soviet Union. According to Castets, it was

founded in February 1968 or possibly earlier. He provides the following overview of its activities, influence and its eventual decline:

“After 1949, the first big organised clandestine party was formed under the name of the Eastern Turkistan People’s Party (ETPP) (Sharki Turkistan Halk Partisi). Mainly drawing in Uyghurs but also Kazakhs, it was founded in secret, according to the Chinese authorities, in February 1968; This was a separatist Pan-Turkist party with Marxist allegiances. [...]

The ETPP focused its activity on mobilising Turkic-speaking populations and officials in Xinjiang with the aim of preparing a mass insurrection against Peking. At the same time, it took up guerrilla activities (sabotage, skirmishes with the police and the Chinese army...) and was behind various attempts at insurrection during the 1960s and the 1970s. Still quite active during the 1970s, it was gradually weakened by the arrest of its leaders, by the gradual falling away of Soviet support as the tension between Moscow and Peking relaxed, and then by the decline of the communist ideology. Nevertheless, while the ETPP was in decline, a new party of anti-Marxist opposition was developing in southern Xinjiang.” (Castets, 2003)

As Dillon (2004) notes, a group of ETPRP members that “set out from Kashgar and Meket for the Soviet border to solicit support for their case and establish a base for their pro-independence activities” was rounded up by Chinese troops in August 1969. After this incident, Chinese authorities claimed that the ETPRP had been destroyed. However, the author points out that “subsequent events were to demonstrate that this was not the case and that [the ETPRP] persisted underground” (Dillon, 2004, pp. 58-59).

According to Dillon, “Uyghur opposition to Chinese rule gradually became more overtly nationalist during the 1980s as the repressive atmosphere of the Cultural Revolution began to fade.” This included an aborted armed insurrection attempt by a newly formed pro-independence organisation called the Eastern Turkestan Prairie Fire Party (Dong Tujuesitan Liaoyuan dang) in Jiashi county (east of Kashgar) in March 1980. (Dillon, 2004, p. 59)

Other incidents during the 1980s included riots in Kashgar in October 1981 and Uyghur student protests in Urumqi in December 1985 and in Beijing in November 1985 and December 1988 (Dillon, 2004, pp. 59-60).

Castets’ journal article (2003) provides details about the emergence of Uyghur student associations and student protests as part of a revival of Uyghur religious and cultural identity in the 1980s:

“The 1980s saw a return towards the traditions and the ‘imagined foundations’ of Uyghur identity. This phenomenon in its many forms manifests itself, for example, in the proliferation of books and academic research into Uyghur history and culture. It has also taken the form, as among the Hui, of an Islamic revival. [...]

The revival of the Uyghurs’ Islamic culture and identity has also led, during the 1980s, to the formation of student associations aiming to promote the rights and culture of the



Uyghurs: the Tengritakh Association (Tianshan), the Youth Association of East Turkistan, the Students' Cultural and Scientific Association. [...]

In the thirty years between 1949 and 1979, almost no demonstration was held by the Xinjiang minority students in Xinjiang, but after 1980, student demonstrations have broke out one after another." (Castets, 2003)

As Dillon writes, the resurgence of nationalism in Xinjiang led to "growing concern in Beijing about the problem of separatism" (which is also referred to as "splittism"). The authorities adopted what Dillon refers to as a "two-pronged response" to the Uyghur opposition:

"The army, People's Militia and officers and men of the Public Security Bureau (the police) were deployed to attack and arrest the armed insurgents who were dealt with severely, but those who were regarded as dupes and less significant participants were visited by the police, senior religious figures and relatives brought in by the authorities and shown the error of their ways." (Dillon, 2004, pp. 59-60)

As Castets notes, during the 1980s, a new Islamic Pan-Turkic trend re-organised around the East Turkistan Islamic Party (ETIP) (Sharki Turkistan Islam Partisi), a Pan-Turkic nationalist movement that gained prominence at the time of the Baren uprising which took place near Kashgar in April 1990:

"As the Soviet Union lost its appeal among anti-colonialist Muslims to the benefit of revolutionary Islam, and as the revival of Islamism was gathering pace in Xinjiang, the Islamic Pan-Turkic trend centred on the south of Xinjiang was given renewed vigour by new young leaders. It was re-organised around the East Turkistan Islamic Party (ETIP) (Sharki Turkistan Islam Partisi). This Pan-Turkic nationalist movement also aimed at renewing Islam among the Uyghurs and developed from networks of mosques in southern Xinjiang during the 1980s. [...] Probably also inspired by the Afghans' success against the Soviets, it really came into prominence in April 1990 at the time of the Baren insurrection (near Kashgar). The insurrection, which lasted for several days, caused several dozen deaths on the insurgents' side and forced the Chinese army to deploy significant forces in the region to put down the rebellion." (Castets, 2003)

Dillon writes that "political violence spread throughout the [wider] region" during the 1990s and that "the conflict became more severe and more organized" as the decade progressed (Dillon, 2004, p. 62).

The same source refers to the April 1990 Baren riots as crucial in determining the regions' "slide into conflict and violence". Initially, "a group of mainly Uyghur men attending prayers at a mosque [...] began criticising CCP [Chinese Communist Party] policies towards ethnic minorities including birth control, nuclear weapons testing [in the region] and the export of Xinjiang's resources to 'inland China'". As Dillon writes, "[t]his developed into a mass protest with some activists calling for a jihad to drive the Han unbelievers out of Xinjiang and to establish an East Turkestan state". The riots were eventually suppressed by units of the police, militia and reportedly 1000 regular People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops. (Dillon, 2004, p. 62)

As the same author states, further Uyghur protests took place in six towns in the Ili region of northwestern Xinjiang in April 1995 and in Khotan in July in 1995. A number of violent incidents were documented in Aksu between February and April 1996 (Dillon, 2004, pp. 68-71).

The April 2014 BBC News article notes that since the 9/11 attacks in the United States, “China has increasingly portrayed its Uyghur separatists as auxiliaries of al-Qaeda, saying they have received training in Afghanistan” while “[l]ittle evidence has been produced in support of these claims” (BBC News, 30 April 2014).

Millward further provides an overview of developments from the late 1990s onwards:

“After the Bush Administration rolled out its Global War on Terror following 9/11, China utilized this rubric to rebrand overnight those East Turkestan separatists it had once called ‘nationalists,’ ‘counter-revolutionaries,’ and ‘Pan-Turkists’ with new terminology: they were now called ‘religious extremists’ and ‘terrorists,’ implying jihadi religious rather than ethno-national motivation. Ironically, though, even as Chinese and Western media and counterterrorism think tanks speculated about the rising Uyghur Islamic terrorist threat, from 1998-2008 the region remained quiet.” (Millward, 28 May 2014)

Meanwhile, the April 2014 BBC News article notes that there are allegations that the authorities were “intensifying a crackdown after street protests in Xinjiang in the 1990s” (BBC News, 30 April 2014).

As Millward goes on to write, “[f]rom 2008, with the Beijing Olympics, there began to be sporadic incidents, mostly Uyghur clashes with and some attacks on police, military, or other representatives of the state”. The Chinese authorities have tended to refer to “almost every violent incident” as “terrorism”, including the Urumqi riots of July 2009 which resulted in the deaths of almost 200 Han Chinese and “unknown numbers” of persons of Uyghur ethnicity (Millward, 28 May 2014).

As BBC News states, the Chinese government is “accused of exaggerating the threat from Uyghur separatists in order to justify repression in the region” by alleging that Uyghur militants are “waging a violent campaign for an independent state by plotting bombings, sabotage and civic unrest”. With regard to the July 2009 unrest, the BBC notes that authorities “blame[d] Xinjiang separatists based outside China for the unrest” and that they “singled out exiled Uyghur leader Rebiya Kadeer”, alleging that she had incited the violence. Kadeer meanwhile “denied any responsibility for the violence”. (BBC News, 30 April 2014)

## 2 Background information on China and XUAR

### 2.1 Geography



(Source: Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, 2011)



(Source: Holdstock, Nick: *China's Forgotten People: Xinjiang, Terror and the Chinese State*, 2015, p. ix)

The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), located on China's northwestern frontier (Dillon, 2004, p. 3), is the country's largest administrative region (BBC News, 26 September 2014a). As Millward notes, "with an area of 1,664,900 square kilometres, Xinjiang is the size of Great Britain, France, Germany and Spain" combined (Millward, 2007, p. 4).

With regard to the region's borders, Bovingdon states in his 2010 book *Uyghurs: Strangers in Their Own Land*:

"The northern part of the autonomous region is wedged between Kazakhstan and Mongolia, and the southwestern part abuts on Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and a sliver of India. Within China it touches Gansu and Qinghai provinces and the Tibet Autonomous Region." (Bovingdon, 2010, p. 11)

As for the region's name, Bovingdon goes on to explain, many Uyghurs reject the name Xinjiang (meaning "new boundaries OR "new dominions") as something that has been imposed by the Chinese government and "prefer Eastern Turkestan or Uyghurstan, toponyms whose use the government forbids today". (Bovingdon, 2010, p. 24)

With regard to the XUAR's administrative divisions, an Encyclopædia Britannica entry on Xinjiang, which was updated in March 2016, states that the region is "divided on the subregional level into three types of administrative units". These include "two prefecture-level municipalities (dijishi), five autonomous prefectures (zizhizhou), and seven prefectures (diqu)". As the encyclopedia entry goes on to say, the region is further subdivided "into districts under municipalities (shixiaqu), county-level municipalities (xianjishi), counties (xian), and autonomous counties (zizhixian)." (Encyclopædia Britannica, 6 March 2016)

Guo states in his 2015 book *China's spatial (Dis)integration: political economy of the interethnic unrest in Xinjiang* that the XUAR, China's "largest political subdivision" in terms of territorial size, was established on 1 October 1955, replacing the province of Xinjiang. The regions's administrative subdivisions are indicated as follows:

"[The XUAR] is divided into 2 prefecture-level cities, 7 prefectures, and 5 autonomous prefectures for the Mongol, Kirgiz, Kazakh, and Hui minorities. These are then divided into 11 districts, 20 county-level cities, 62 counties, and 6 autonomous counties, and then 5 subprefectural level cities (Aral, Beitun, Shihezi, Tumxuk, and Wujiaq), which do not belong to any prefecture, are administered by the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, a de facto subprovincial unit directly under [the] Chinese central government." (Guo, 2015, p. 7)

An undated map and a list of administrative divisions of the XUAR can be found on the website of Home, James, a real estate brokerage company:

- Home James!: Xinjiang (CN), undated  
<http://homejamesglobal.com/china/xinjiang>

Millward's book *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang* (2007) includes a brief topographical overview of the Xinjiang region:

"The [Xinjiang] region is a rough triangle consisting of three basins, the Tarim to the south, Turfan (Turpan) to the south-east, and the Zungharian to the north. The Kunlun range and its eastern offshoot, the Altyn Tagh, form the southern boundary of the Tarim Basin, and the Tianshan forms its northern edge, dividing the Tarim Basin from Zungharia. The Altai range divides Zungharia from Mongolia on the north-east. To the south-east, the Quruq Tagh, a spur of the Tianshan, separates the Tarim and Turfan Basins." (Millward, 2007, p. 1)

A book chapter in Starr's *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland* (2004) by Stanley W. Toops, an associate professor of geography at Miami University (USA) who is specialised in China, states that Xinjiang consists "mostly of intermontane basins and mountain ranges", noting that "[m]uch of the population lives in the desert-mountain contact zone, including such oases as Kashgar, Khotan, Turpan, and Urumchi, or in steppe lands such as those around Yining (Gulja) and in the Ili River valley". (Toops, 2004, p. 264)

As Holdstock states in his July 2015 book *China's Forgotten People*, the "[Xinjiang] region has been treated as at least two separate parts", with the Tian Shan mountain range "bisect[ing] the region horizontally, dividing it into north and south" (Holdstock, July 2015, p. 13).

Holdstock provides the following overview of the regions north of the Tian Shan:

"The northern part, the Zhungar Basin, is steppe and semi-desert, and in the past was used mostly as pastureland and for growing cereal crops. At present it's where most of Xinjiang's manufacturing is located, as well as the capital, Urumqi. In the north of Xinjiang the Han Chinese form a clear majority, though only due to massive migration from inner China since 1949." (Holdstock, July 2015, p. 13)

Toops (2004) provides details about the topography, climate and main natural resources of Xinjiang's north, which comprises the Zungharian basin and Ili River valley:

"Xinjiang's north is comprised of the Zungharian basin and the Ili River valley, both of which are bounded by the gentle Altay Shan [...] and the more imposing Tian Shan. At the center of the Zungharian basin is the Gurbantangut Desert, which is cold and dry throughout the year. By contrast, the Ili River valley, which is separate from the Zungharian basin, is relatively well watered and drains into the Seven River (Yetisu or Semirechye) region of Kazakhstan. [...] Sheep, cattle, and horses graze the pasturelands of Zungharia and Ili, while irrigated crops are grown on state farms situated in a band connecting Kuitun, Shihezi, and Urumchi. The Zungharian basin has considerable deposits of oil, especially at Karamay, which in fact means 'black oil' in Uyghur. The Altay Shan and Tian Shan both yield mineral and forest products." (Toops, 2004, pp. 266-267)

As for the part of Xinjiang that lies south of the Tian Shan, the Tarim Basin, Holdstock states that it is "dominated by the Taklamakan Desert", with "[o]nly a series of scattered oases" making "agriculture (and settlement) possible in the region". He notes that "at least 80 per cent of the Uyghur population" live in this area (Holdstock, July 2015, p. 13).

Toops (2004) provides the following overview of Xinjiang's south:

"The south is the region surrounding the Tarim basin and covers about half of Xinjiang's total area. In the center of the Tarim basin lies the Taklimakan Desert. [...] With an average annual precipitation of a mere 20 to 150 millimeters (mm), the region is extremely parched by any measure. Comparatively, few members of the local population engage in industry. Most are instead agriculturalists or traders and are concentrated on oases such as Kashgar and Khotan that are situated on the basin's periphery. Thanks to water coming down from the surrounding mountains as rivers or runoff, these irrigated oases support fruits and vegetables, as well as a large cotton culture at Kashgar. Other resources are notable as well. The Tarim basin is a significant new source of oil and gas for energy-starved China, while minerals abound in the Kunlun Shan and Tian Shan." (Toops, 2004, pp. 265-266)

Xinjiang's central zone, which includes the Turpan depression and the Hami basin, is described by Toops as follows:

"Xinjiang's center lies in a fork of the Tian Shan. Here, the Turpan depression extends to 154 meters below sea level, the second-lowest point on earth. The Turpan and nearby Hami basins are oases that owe their abundant grape arbors and cotton fields to the runoff from the Tian Shan. [...] Besides agriculture, this central zone also has some minerals, especially oil, the exploitation of which has had some limited impact on the local economy." (Toops, 2004, p. 266)

Holdstock states that the Turpan Depression is "one of the hottest, driest places in China" where "[i]ts few oases specialise in high-quality, intensely sweet fruit, especially melons and grapes". Furthermore, he notes that the Ili valley, on the far western side of Xinjiang, is

“separated from the Zhungar Basin by the Borohoro Mountains, and from the Tarim Basin by the main range of the Tian Shan”. (Holdstock, 12 July 2015, pp. 13 -14)

According to a December 2015 CNN report, Xinjiang has “large deposits of coal, natural gas and rare earth metals” (CNN, 3 December 2015).

As Bovingdon mentions in his 2010 book, Xinjiang has “rich reserves of natural gas and oil” as well as “substantial quantities of gold, other nonferrous metals, and uranium” (Bovingdon, 2010, p. 11). Toops (2004) states that “[a]gricultural production is also expanding rapidly, led by large-scale cotton culture in the belt between Tupan and Khotan” (Toops, 2004, p. 272). As Bovingdon (2010) notes, the Communist Party of China (CPC) “intends to turn it into the country’s ‘cotton basket’ despite the scarcity of water” (Bovingdon, 2010, p. 11).

## 2.2 Demography

James Leibold, an associate professor at La Trobe University (Australia) who is specialised in ethnic issues in contemporary China, states in his 2013 publication *Ethnic Policy in China: Is Reform Inevitable?*:

“The People’s Republic of China (PRC) hosts a single supermajority with 92 percent of its nearly 1.4 billion people officially classified as Han (汉族). The remaining 114 million people belong to one of fifty-five other diverse ethnic communities. These are collectively known as ethnic minorities (少数民族): each ranging from a few thousand to several million people who, while concentrated along China’s strategic and resource rich border regions, are spread across the nation.” (Leibold, 2013)

Samuel Myers, Xiaoyan Gao and Britt Cecconi Cruz write in a journal article of 2013 that the 55 nationally recognized minorities comprise “just less than 9 % of China’s total population” (Myers/Gao/ Cecconi Cruz, p. 232)

As Todd and Raschke write in their book *The ETIM: China's Islamic Militants and the Global Terrorist Threat* (2010), “[t]he Uyghurs are one of the PRC’s 55 officially recognized ethnic minorities (Todd/Raschke, 2010, p. 6).

With regard to the XUAR’s ethnic composition, a July 2014 article of the Economist newspaper noted that in 2012, Uyghurs constituted 46 per cent of Xinjiang’s population while persons of Han ethnicity made up 39 per cent (Economist, 1 July 2014). A profile on the Xinjiang territory published by BBC News in October 2014 states that 45 per cent of the region’s population are Uyghur, while 40 per cent are Han Chinese (BBC News, 14 October 2014).

The Encyclopædia Britannica states in its entry on Xinjiang (updated in March 2016):

“Xinjiang is inhabited by more than 40 different ethnic groups, the largest of which are the Uighurs and the (Chinese). In addition to Hui (Chinese Muslims), other groups include Mongolians, Khalkha, Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Tungusic-speaking Manchu and Sibos, Tajiks, Tatars, Russians, and Tahurs.” (Encyclopædia Britannica, 6 March 2016)

Citing data from the China Statistical Yearbook (2010), an October 2015 article of the Financial Times (FT) indicates that 46.4 per cent of Xinjiang's population are Uyghur while ethnic Han make up 39 per cent. Kazakhs and Hui account for 7 per cent and 4.5 per cent of Xinjiang's population respectively, while other ethnic groups account for 3.1 per cent (FT, 13 October 2015).

In his 2004 book *Xinjiang – China's Muslim Far Northwest*, Dillon notes that the Uyghurs are “[t]he single most important ethnic group” in the XUAR. As Dillon goes on to say, “[o]ther major non-Han ethnic groups in Xinjiang include the Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks and Tajiks [...] and the Muslim Hui” (Dillon, 2004, pp. 23-24).

A November 2014 article of *Jeune Afrique*, a French language weekly news magazine published in Paris, notes that the relative numerical significance of ethnic Uyghurs in the region is decreasing sharply as the government systematically encourages people from other regions to settle in Xinjiang (*Jeune Afrique*, 10 November 2014).

Millward writes in his book *Eurasian Crossroads* (2007):

“Although the Uyghur population [...] has also increased markedly since 1949, Han population has grown much faster and by 2000 equalled that of Uyghurs region-wide when the floating population [of non-registered migrants] is taken into account, and exceeded it if military personnel stationed in Xinjiang are included.” (Millward, 2007, p. 307)

An overview of demographic developments in the XUAR is provided in the April 2016 US Department of State (USDOS) *Country Report on Human Rights Practices*, which covers the year 2015:

“According to the State Council's 2015 White Paper on Xinjiang, 8.59 million, or 37 percent, of the XUAR's official residents were Han. Uighur, Hui, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and other ethnic minorities constituted 14.63 million XUAR residents, or 63 percent of the total population. Official statistics understated the Han population because they did not count the tens of thousands of Han Chinese residents on paramilitary compounds (bingtuan) and those who were long-term “temporary workers.” As the government continued to promote Han migration into the XUAR and filled local jobs with domestic migrant labor, local officials coerced young Uighur men and women to participate in a government-sponsored labor transfer program to cities outside the XUAR, according to overseas human rights organizations.” (USDOS, 13 April 2016, section 6)

Millward notes that “although the Urumchi environs – northern cities like Tacheng and even Korla and Aqsu – has had large Han populations for some time, one of the most obvious changes in Xinjiang in the 1990s-2000s was the increased numbers of Han Chinese in southern Xinjiang towns” (Millward, 2007, p. 307-308).

Bovingdon states in his book *The Uyghurs: Strangers in Their Own Land* (2010):



“Uyghurs predominate in the Tarim Basin oases of southern Xinjiang. According to official figures, 9.65 million Uyghurs lived in the XUAR in 2007. Sixty years ago they constituted the vast majority of the population, three-quarters of the region’s 1944 population of less than four million. Hans then were a tiny minority, barely exceeding 200,000, and that only after several decades of Han immigration with the support of successive warlords and later China’s Nationalist government.

What the Nationalists had only encouraged, the Communists compelled for almost two decades: state-directed immigration beginning in 1950 that increased the Han population to nearly five million by 1975. From the mid-1980s on, state policies to lure more immigrants brought that figure to roughly 8.2 million in 2007. Thus while Uyghurs are still officially the most numerous non-Han group in Xinjiang, they now constitute only a plurality.” (Bovingdon, 2010, pp. 11-12)

In a chapter contributed to Alain-G Gagnon and Michael Keating’s book *Political Autonomy and Divided Societies: Imagining Democratic Alternatives in Complex Settings* (2012), Isabelle Coté, assistant professor of political science at the Memorial University of Newfoundland, states that “[w]ith next to no authority over matters of migration, Uighurs and other local minzu are powerless in the face of constant and growing migration of an economically and socially dominant ethnic group” (Coté, 2012, p. 181).

In his 2003 journal article, Castets notes the role of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC) (*Xinjiang shengchan jianche bingtuan*) in directing large-scale Han colonisation in the region after 1949:

“Since 1949, the region has seen a massive inflow of Han immigrants mainly directed there by the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC) (*Xinjiang shengchan jianche bingtuan*). Originally, this organisation had helped former soldiers demobilised after the Civil War to settle down, by providing some advantages to its members. These corps of ‘peasant-soldiers’ sent to the margins of the country to open up new pioneer areas did not survive the Cultural Revolution, except in Xinjiang where they were revitalised during the 1980s in order to pursue demographic colonisation while boosting the manpower needed to provide security for the region.” (Castets, September/October 2003)

As the South China Morning Post (SCMP), a Hong Kong-based English-language daily newspaper, states in a May 2015 article, “[t]hroughout Xinjiang, the Han and Uygur communities live almost entirely separately” (SCMP, 8 May 2015).

A September 2013 article of The Atlantic, a Washington, D.C.-based magazine that focuses on literature, politics and foreign affairs, notes that there is a lack of intermarriage between Uyghurs and Hans. The source specifies that only two per cent of households in Xinjiang are bi-ethnic and that “most of those are marriages between Uighur and other minorities”. (The Atlantic, 27 September 2013)

Similarly, in their contribution to Starr's *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, Rudelson and Jankowiak also write that while "[u]rban Mandarin-speaking Uyghurs demonstrate a great willingness to associate with Han colleagues, [...] this openness does not extend to marriage", for "Hans and Uyghurs practically never marry". (Rudelson/Jankowiak, 2004, p. 311)

### 2.3 Legal and governmental structure

Article 4 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, adopted in December 1982, amended as of March 2004, includes the following provisions regarding regional autonomy in areas with "concentrated communities" of ethnic minorities:

"Regional autonomy is practised in areas where people of minority nationalities live in concentrated communities; in these areas organs of self-government are established to exercise the power of autonomy. All national autonomous areas are integral parts of the People's Republic of China." (Constitution of the People's Republic of China, 14 March 2004, Article 4)

Articles 112 through 122 of the Constitution contain provisions relating to the organs of self-government of "National Autonomous Areas". Article 112 provides the following:

"The organs of self-government of national autonomous areas are the people's congresses and people's governments of autonomous regions, autonomous prefectures and autonomous counties." (Constitution of the People's Republic of China, 14 March 2004, Article 112)

Article 114 of the Constitution specifies that "[t]he chairman of an autonomous region, the prefect of an autonomous prefecture or the head of an autonomous county shall be a citizen of the nationality exercising regional autonomy in the area concerned" (Constitution of the People's Republic of China, 14 March 2004, Article 114).

Article 116 of the Constitution delineates the legislative powers of the people's congresses of autonomous areas:

"The people's congresses of national autonomous areas have the power to enact regulations on the exercise of autonomy and other separate regulations in the light of the political, economic and cultural characteristics of the nationality or nationalities in the areas concerned. The regulations on the exercise of autonomy and other separate regulations of autonomous regions shall be submitted to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress for approval before they go into effect. Those of autonomous prefectures and counties shall be submitted to the standing committees of the people's congresses of provinces or autonomous regions for approval before they go into effect, and they shall be reported to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress for the record." (Constitution of the People's Republic of China, 14 March 2004, Article 116)

Article 120 of the Constitution allows organs of self-government to "organize local public security forces":

“The organs of self-government of the national autonomous areas may, according to the military system of the State and practical local needs and with the approval of the State Council, organize local public security forces for the maintenance of public order.”  
(Constitution of the People’s Republic of China, 14 March 2004, Article 120)

The Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law of the People’s Republic of China, issued in May 1984, effective as of October 1984 and amended as of February 2001, stipulates with regard to the governance of ethnic autonomous areas:

*Article 3* Ethnic autonomous areas establish autonomous agencies that function as local agencies of state power at their respective levels. Autonomous agencies in ethnic autonomous areas shall apply the principle of democratic centralism.

*Article 4* Autonomous agencies in ethnic autonomous areas shall exercise the functions and powers of local state agencies as specified in Section 5 of Chapter III of the Constitution. At the same time, they exercise the power of autonomy within the limits of their authority as prescribed by the Constitution, by this Law and other laws, and implement the laws and policies of the state in the light of existing local conditions. Autonomous agencies in autonomous prefectures exercise the functions and powers of local state agencies over cities divided into districts and cities with counties under their jurisdiction and, at the same time, exercise the power of autonomy.

*Article 5* Autonomous agencies in ethnic autonomous areas must uphold the unity of the country and guarantee that the Constitution and other laws are observed and implemented in these areas.

*Article 6* Autonomous agencies in ethnic autonomous areas lead the people of the various nationalities in a concentrated effort to promote socialist modernization. [...]

*Article 7* Institutions of self-government in ethnic autonomous areas shall place the interests of the state as a whole above all else and actively fulfill all tasks assigned by state institutions at higher levels. [...]

*Article 12* Autonomous areas may be established where one or more minority nationalities live in concentrated communities, in the light of local conditions such as the relationship among the various nationalities and the level of economic development, and with due consideration for historical background.

Within an ethnic autonomous area, appropriate autonomous areas or ethnic townships may be established where other ethnic minorities live in concentrated communities. Some residential areas and towns of the Han nationality or other nationalities may be included in an ethnic autonomous area in consideration of actual local conditions. [...]

*Article 19* The people’s congresses of ethnic autonomous areas shall have the power to enact self-governing regulations and separate regulations in the light of the political, economic and cultural characteristics of the nationality or nationalities in the areas concerned. The self-governing regulations and separate regulations of autonomous

regions shall be submitted to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress for approval before they go into effect. The regulations on the exercise of autonomy and separate regulations of autonomous prefectures and autonomous counties are submitted to the Standing Committees of the People's Congresses of provinces, autonomous regions, or directly-administered municipalities for approval before they go into effect, and they are reported to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and the State Council for the record. [...]

*Article 23* When recruiting personnel in accordance with state regulations, enterprises and institutions in ethnic autonomous areas give priority to minority nationalities and may enlist them from the population of minority nationalities in rural and pastoral areas.

*Article 24* Autonomous agencies in ethnic autonomous areas may, in accordance with the military system of the state and practical local need and with the approval of the State Council, organize local public security forces for the maintenance of public order.” (Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law of the People's Republic of China, 28 February 2001, Articles 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 12, 19, 23 and 24)

Bovingdon's 2010 book *Uyghurs: Strangers in Their Own Land* comments on the formation of the XUAR and of various ethnic autonomous areas within the region:

“The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) was established with great fanfare in October 1955. While in principle, the Uyghurs thereby received title to the property, what they confronted was in fact a condominium of nested autonomies, leaving them a patchwork of territories — principally Qumul and Turpan, Aqsu, Kashgar, and Khotän districts — divided and surrounded by the others (figure 2.1) and further overlaid by the overwhelmingly Han military–agricultural garrisons of the Production and Construction Corps (PCC) (McMillen 1981:70– 71).

The territory had been parceled out in a series of steps over the previous eighteen months and was presented to the Uyghurs as a *fait accompli* when the XUAR was established.” (Bovingdon, July 2010, p. 44)

“The division of Xinjiang into a number of smaller autonomies was a stroke of administrative genius. In parceling out ‘subautonomies,’ the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) simultaneously satisfied the goals of embodying the idea that Xinjiang belonged to thirteen different *minzu* and of counterbalancing the Uyghurs’ overwhelming political and demographic weight. [...] By the end of 1954, more than 50 percent of the area of the province had been allotted to autonomous townships, districts, counties, and prefectures. In fifteen out of twenty-seven units established, the titular *minzu* constituted less than half the population [...].

[...] According to 2000 figures, in none of the five autonomous districts in Xinjiang does the titular population exceed 25 percent of the total, and Bayangol Mongol District is only 4 percent Mongols.” (Bovingdon, July 2010, pp. 44-46)

The constitutional and legal provisions pertaining to regional autonomy in the XUAR are discussed by Bovingdon as follows:

“Successive PRC constitutions and associated organic laws have codified a national plan for minzu regional autonomy in a set of institutions, cultural and linguistic rights that the institutions were intended to secure, and a carefully specified relationship between those institutions and the central government. Xinjiang’s distinctive features and political history notwithstanding, its ‘autonomous’ government institutions emerged from that national plan and therefore strongly resemble those in China’s other autonomous regions.

Both the 1952 Program for Implementing Minzu Regional Autonomy and the 1954 constitution made clear the expectation that autonomous units at county, prefectural, and provincial levels would have governmental organs broadly similar to those at the corresponding levels in China proper. Stipulated elements included the standard branches of government, a people’s congress with elected representatives chosen from the titular group or groups as well as Hans, and obedience to higherlevel government organs. Both documents provided that actual institutional forms could be determined by the wishes of the ‘great majority of the people and leading figures with links to the people’ of the titular group or groups. Military organization was not left to local discretion. Although the program allowed for the establishment of local police cadres, all security personnel, including soldiers, fell under the ‘unified national military system.’ Between 1950 and 1955, troops in the predominantly Uyghur and Qazaq Ili National Army (INA), formerly the military arm of the Eastern Turkestan Republic (ETR), were folded into the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) or demobilized and settled on paramilitary farms. In both cases, they fell under direct CCP control (McMillen 1979:53; Shichor 2004:127– 29, 132).

The first constitution also committed the government to drawing up a national autonomy law. Even though the Government Administration Council had passed the program in 1952, a formal law was promulgated only in 1984 and then amended in 2001. In addition to these organizational principles, the 1984 autonomy law affirmed in general terms what had been practices of long duration in the autonomous regions: ‘affirmative action’ in the recruitment of college students, the hiring of employees at state enterprises, and the training of base-level government cadres.

The articles of the autonomy law reveal the limitations built into the system. Article 15 indicates that all autonomous government organs are under the leadership of the State Council and all must ‘obey the state council.’ Article 20 grants organs of autonomy the right to ‘alter or suspend’ policies or orders promulgated by higher-level government units but makes such actions subject to approval by those superior units. And while it acknowledges the right of autonomous regional governments to draw up locally appropriate ‘statutes on autonomy and specific regulations,’ article 19 also grants the National People’s Congress the authority to approve or reject such statutes. [...]

The legal scholar Matthew Moneyhon (2002:137) argued that whatever rights the state constitution and autonomy law grant in principle to local decision-making bodies, by requiring that central government organs approve all local decisions, the national laws withdraw most of those rights in practice.

[...] Beijing nonetheless retains veto power over the decisions of Xinjiang's People's Congress. The center has chosen each of Xinjiang's successive executives, and the Supreme People's Court retains supervisory power over Xinjiang's courts. Furthermore, Beijing reserves broad discretionary power over Xinjiang's cases power affairs, over including resource exploitation, how autonomy policing, is implemented; and the center allocates power over resource exploitation, policing, and other matters on its own initiative, rather than being bound by power-sharing arrangements (Moneyhon 2002:137, 142-44). [...]

As confining authority as the legal framework has proved, actual political practice in Beijing and Ürümci has made still greater incursions into the region's hypothetical autonomy. In Yu Xingzhong's estimation, rather than providing a new hypothetical legal framework for the system, both the 1984 and 2001 versions of the autonomy law simply recorded in statutory form what already were features of established practice. Legal revisions followed policy changes, and not vice versa, and Beijing still governs by policy rather than by law (Yu Xingzhong n.d.)." (Bovingdon, July 2010, pp. 47-49)

Isabelle Coté writes in her chapter in Gagnon's and Keating's 2012 book *Political Autonomy and Divided Societies: Imagining Democratic Alternatives in Complex Settings*:

"Claiming that power and representation had to be divided among the 13 constituent minzu even though the Uighurs were, and still are, the largest ethnic group in Xinjiang, the State assigned control over some parts of the territory to these smaller minorities, thus creating a system in which one group's autonomous territory contains or is juxtaposed with another group's autonomous territory [...]" (Coté, 2012, pp. 177-178)

"It was only on 1 October 1955 that Uighurs were granted autonomy in the form of the XUAR. But even then, there were important limitations to the extent to which Uighurs exercised autonomy over 'their' region. Territories with a relatively homogenous populace were divided up so that in some areas, the majority Uighur population became a *de facto* minority – as was the case with the Uighur population residing in the Ili Kazhak Autonomous Prefecture, for instance. Making matters worse, in keeping with the LREA and the Chinese Constitution, cities are not meant to be autonomous or ethnic [...]. As a result of this distinction, predominantly Uighur cities located in another minority's autonomous county or prefecture (such as Gulja, located in the Ili Kazhak Autonomous Prefecture) were not given autonomous status." (Coté, 2012, p. 178)

"[S]maller ethnic groups residing in the region have been able to benefit from Xinjiang's peculiar autonomy system. Indeed, several smaller or internal minorities such as the Kazaks, Hui and Mongols have been granted limited autonomous powers over the conduct of local affairs. [...] But these benefits are nonetheless limited, as Xinjiang's complex and juxtaposed autonomy system also makes it difficult to delineate the realm

of power that is devolved to each group. Just as Uighurs are required to obtain the permission of the (Han-dominated) Standing Committee of the National People's Congress to adapt a law in light of their 'local conditions', the Kyrgyz and Mongols also have to submit their local amendments to the (Uighur- and Han-dominated) Provincial People's Congress. And if it is true that the central government is reluctant to decentralize certain crucial economic and political matters at the provincial level, so are provincial-level governmental departments reluctant to devolve powers to autonomous areas, especially where economic matters are concerned [...]." (Coté, 2012, p. 179)

## 2.4 Political landscape

With regard to state policies in ethnic minority regions, Terry Narramore, a lecturer in International Relations at the University of Tasmania (Australia) who is specialised in the politics of China, writes in his chapter in the November 2015 book *Violence and the State* by Matt Killingsworth, Matthew Sussex and Jan Pakulski:

"As in other areas that potentially challenge its authority, the state cultivates and co-opts an acceptable or 'patriotic' face of minority identity. There are thus officially sanctioned standards of political appointment, economic opportunity, religious practice, and cultural, linguistic and educational attainment that are tolerated and promoted. It is the tightly controlled limits of this identity and the denial of genuine self-determination that are the causes of contentious politics and violence." (Narramore, November 2015)

As Bovingdon writes in his book *Uyghurs : Strangers in Their Own Land* (2010), for Uyghurs in the XUAR, there are "no legitimate political parties outside the CCP that they may join" (Bovingdon, July 2010, p. 8). With regard to CCP membership, the author notes that "[t]op party officials at all levels in Xinjiang have been overwhelmingly Han" (Bovingdon, July 2010, pp. 9-10).

Bovingdon (July 2010) elaborates on the significance of Han immigration and "subprovincial units of autonomy" for the XUAR's security architecture:

"The PLA [People's Liberation Army] and other security forces enjoy a decisive logistical and military advantage over any potentially violent challengers in Xinjiang. Both the system of nested autonomies and the network of strategically located PCC [Production and Construction Corps] farms have augmented Beijing's capacity to control the region by giving non-Uyghurs in Xinjiang a stake in the current distribution of power. The strategic deployment of immigrants and subprovincial units of autonomy has ensured that even if Uyghurs were to join together in a peaceful demand for independence tomorrow, they would be opposed by the nearly eight million Hans as well as by more than two million members of other Turkic, Xibo, and Mongol groups. To maintain the loyalties of numerically small groups, the party has incorporated members of each into the government through targeted recruitment, which mirrors and reinforces the effects of the territorial parcelization. By appointing members of those groups to offices in a higher proportion than their ratio in the wider population (Benson and Svanberg 1998:121), the system dilutes the already meager influence of Uyghurs and gives other groups disproportionate authority in the system." (Bovingdon, July 2010, pp. 61-62)

The same source notes that elections are held only at village level and that “party officials still have an influential hand in selecting (and excluding) candidates” for these elections. Moreover, the author notes that “[h]igher offices are filled by appointment” and that the few Uyghurs selected for prominent positions have been “carefully vetted for their tractability” after decades-long service in the bureaucracy (Bovingdon, July 2010, p. 8).

As Bovingdon goes on to say, the head of the XUAR government and Uyghur and other non-Han leaders in various government entities are “explicitly chosen [...] on the basis of minzu [ethnic] affiliation”. The XUAR government must be headed by an Uyghur, and the head of the Ili prefectural government must be a Kazakh. According to Bovingdon, the state claims that such leaders are “able and expected to represent the common interests of all”, frequently accusing such office holders who “focus on the interests of their respective minzu” as “narrow nationalists”, and dismissing them from their offices (Bovingdon, July 2010, p. 9). Meanwhile, the same source notes that “Uyghurs and other non-Hans have been best represented at the lowest levels of government.” (Bovingdon, July 2010, p. 62)

As reported by the Guardian newspaper in December 2015, the CPC is recruiting new members in the XUAR. The number of CPC members in 2014 was 1.45 million. Meanwhile, the article quotes Julia Famularo, an international securities studies fellow at Yale University (USA), as saying that the CPC believes it is facing a “crisis of faith” in Xinjiang and Tibet, fearing that newly recruited ethnic minority members have “only superficial loyalty to the party-state”. Famularo is quoted as citing complaints by Beijing that these members “still make clandestine visits to mosques and monasteries, and that they still have stronger ties to their own people than to the party or to China”. (Guardian, 8 December 2015)

Alessandra Cappelletti, an adjunct professor international relations of East Asia at American University of Rome (Italy), writes in a chapter contributed to Anna Hayes’s and Michael E. Clarke’s *Inside Xinjiang: Space, Place and Power in China’s Muslim Far Northwest* (2016):

“[T]here was a difference between Hans and Uyghurs in terms of their relationship between themselves, the Party and Beijing. For Uyghurs, this relationship can be identified as more openly ‘opportunistic’ when compared to that of Han cadres and the CCP. For Uyghurs, there is a wide-spread perception that the CCP is an organisation conceived of and imposed from outside, it is not born within their own society. As a result, they lack the sense of belonging to the CCP and Beijing that is common among Han officials.” (Cappelletti, 2016, p. 157)

In a September 2015 journal article, Yuchao Zhu, associate professor of Political Science at the University of Regina (Canada), and Dongyan Blachford, professor of Chinese Studies at the same university, state that an organisation called the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC) (often referred to as *bingtuan*) is a “distinctive feature of China’s ethnic frontier governance in Xinjiang” (Zhu/Blachford, 16 September 2015, p. 26).

A May 2013 article of the Economist newspaper gives an overview of the history of the XPCC (*bingtuan*), which was founded in 1954, abolished by Mao Zedong in 1975 and re-established under Deng Xiaoping in 1981:



“The paramilitary role of the corps is just the latest in a series of attempts to settle Xinjiang dating back to the region’s conquest by China’s Qing dynasty emperors in the 18th century (many of the settlers then were Manchu soldiers). The bingtuan itself was founded in 1954, consisting mainly of demobilised Han soldiers. They were ordered to turn desert areas into farmland while keeping their guns to fend off potential incursions by the Soviet Union. In 1953 Han Chinese formed less than 10% of Xinjiang’s population. [...] In 1975, a year before he died, Mao Zedong abolished the corps, which was in tatters due to factional feuding in the Cultural Revolution and the ravages of central planning. In 1981 Deng Xiaoping re-established it, though there was no obvious economic reason for doing so. Grain and cotton output from former bingtuan farms had been recovering rapidly. But Uighur unrest, including what officials saw as anti-Han violence, had broken out in several places.” (Economist, 25 May 2013)

A December 2015 article of *The Diplomat* states that in 1998, the XPCC was “formally given administrative status on par with Xinjiang’s regional government” (*The Diplomat*, 16 December 2015).

In his 2015 book *China’s spatial (Dis)integration*, Rongxing Guo of Peking University provides the following overview of the XPCC:

“The stated goals of the XPCC are to develop frontier regions, promote economic development, ensure social stability and ethnic harmony, and consolidate border defense. As a unique semi-military governmental organization and located in Xinjiang Uyghur autonomous region, the XPCC has administrative authority over six medium-sized cities (i.e., Aral, Beitun, Kuitun, Shihezi, Tumushuke, and Wujiaqu) as well as settlements and farms all across Xinjiang. It has its own administrative structure, fulfilling governmental functions such as healthcare and education for areas under its jurisdiction. The Government of Xinjiang Uyghur [A]utonomous [R]egion does not usually interfere in the administration of these areas.” (Guo, 2015, p. 15)

The May 2013 *Economist* article describes the *bingtuan* as a “state-run organisation” that administers areas around Xinjiang that have an overall population of 2.6 million, of whom 86 per cent are ethnic Han Chinese. As the article goes on to say, “[t]he *bingtuan* operates its own schools, hospitals and newspapers” and has “its own courts, police and prisons as well as a 120,000-strong militia force”, and “produces nearly one-sixth of Xinjiang’s GDP”. The article notes that the *bingtuan* “partly justifies its existence by saying it is needed to maintain stability in Xinjiang”. The article quotes a 2007 book by critical Beijing writer Wang Lixiong as referring to the *bingtuan* as an “autonomous Han province” within Xinjiang that is alienating itself from local governments (which have no judicial authority over *bingtuan* settlements in their areas) and the Uyghur population. (*Economist*, 25 May 2013)

In his book *Strangers in their own land* (2010), Bovingdon quotes a professor of the XUAR party school as writing that the XPCC (*bingtuan*) “administers its own internal affairs” and claims its own public security apparatus, procuratorate, judiciary and prisons. The same source notes that with regard to powers outside its own scope of authority, the XPCC “is answerable not to the party organization or the government of Xinjiang but instead directly to

the State Council in Beijing”. Referring to several academic sources, the same author writes that “[t]here is a strong case to be made that Beijing regards the organization as a better counter to the threat of Uyghur nationalism than the Xinjiang government itself.” (Bovingdon, July 2010, p. 60)

Zhu and Blachford (September 2015) write about the XPCC’s demographic significance and its scope of activities in the social and economic spheres:

“At present, Bingtuan has grown from its initial stage of 200,000 de-militarized soldiers and their families to now having a population of 2.6 million (about 12% of the total Xinjiang population, 2010 Census), consisting of 14 divisions in its administrated areas, 175 state farms and 517 independent units engaged in public transportation, construction and commercial activities. As a big enterprise of conglomerate, Bingtuan has also developed 1,400 industrial, construction, transport and commercial enterprises, 13 holding and listed companies, and eight state-level and 21 Bingtuan-level leading enterprises of agricultural production. Bingtuan also has six institutions for higher learning and adult colleges, 775 elementary and middle schools, secondary technical schools and vocational schools. In fact, Bingtuan has become a complete economic and social system in its administrated areas.” (Zhu/Blachford, 16 September 2015, p. 34)

Zhu and Blachford go on to elaborate on the legal status and administrative structure of the XPCC:

“Legally speaking, as Bingtuan is defined as a special political, social, economic and military institution at the rank of provincial level, it handles its own administrative and judicial affairs within the areas under its jurisdiction. Bingtuan’s organizational structure is very distinctive, e.g. there are three levels of administrative units: Bingtuan Commanding Headquarters, Division and Regiment are all integrated administrative structures, actually corresponding to China’s provincial, prefecture and county-level administrative order. In addition to its distinctive administrative structure, as a traditional tunkun institution, from the beginning Bingtuan has been a Han majority institution, though its members also include people from 37 different ethnic groups.” (Zhu/Blachford, 16 September 2015, pp. 34-35)

Meanwhile, the May 2013 Economist article refers to the XPCC militia forces as being “ill-trained” and that while the organisation aims to have “emergency response” units in each of its nearly 180 “regiments”, “professional security forces are usually the first to be called out” (Economist, 25 May 2013). Narramore (November 2015) states that the XPCC is now “increasingly dedicated to urbanisation and [...] commercial and industrial development” and “less focused on agricultural and paramilitary roles” (Narramore, November 2015).

### 3 Security Situation in China and its potential impact on the Uyghur people

As BBC News notes, information from Xinjiang is “tightly controlled, particularly concerning incidents that occur there” (BBC News, 1 November 2013). For further information on this issue, please [refer to section](#) 4.1 (Freedom of expression) of this compilation.

#### 3.1 Overview of the current security situation and relevant actors

##### 3.1.1 General security situation

As Amnesty International (AI) notes in its Report 2015/16, which covers the year 2015, a “Strike Hard” campaign in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region targeting “violent terrorism and religious extremism”, which had been launched in May 2014 and limited to one year, was extended throughout the year 2015 (AI, 24 February 2016, see also HRW, 27 January 2016). According to the Human Rights Watch (HRW) *World Report 2016*, which covers the year 2015, the government deployed more security forces to the region during 2015 (HRW, 27 January 2016). As the AI report indicates, during the year 2015, “[a]n increasing number of violent incidents and counter-terrorism operations were reported, resulting in many casualties.” In May 2015, the authorities announced that they had dismantled 181 “terrorist groups” (AI, 24 February 2016).

The Human Rights Watch (HRW) *World Report 2016* of January 2016 notes:

“Since mid-2014, authorities have detained, arrested, or killed increasing numbers of Uighurs alleged by police to have been involved in illegal or terrorist activities, but the authorities’ claims are impossible to verify independently.” (HRW, 27 January 2016)

A January 2016 article by Radio Free Asia (RFA), a private, nonprofit international broadcaster created and funded by the US government that disseminates news and information to audiences in Asia, refers to human rights organisations mentioning the government’s “heavy-handed rule in Xinjiang, including violent police raids on Uyghur households” (RFA, 6 January 2016).

Meanwhile, the June 2015 US Department of State (USDOS) Country Report on Terrorism, which covers the year 2014, emphasizes that “because of the Chinese government’s tight control of information, it remained difficult to determine whether particular raids, detentions, arrests, or judicial punishments targeted individuals who were seeking political goals, voicing local grievances, or orchestrating criminal or terrorist acts” (USDOS, June 2015, chapter 2).

The same report goes on to say that a “lack of information” provided by the government sometimes made it difficult to verify details of violent incidents. In numerous incidents which the government referred to as “terrorism”, it was alleged that the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) “influenced or directed the violence through its online propaganda” (USDOS, June 2015, chapter 2).

According to a February 2015 article of Foreign Policy (FP), a US news publication focusing on global affairs, “scholars, human rights groups, and Uighur advocates argue that China is

systematically exaggerating” the threat posed by Uyghurs “to justify [...] repressive policies in Xinjiang” (FP, 9 February 2015).

Meanwhile, a September 2015 article of Al-Monitor, a Washington, D.C.-based media site focusing on the Middle East, quotes Jacob Zenn, an analyst of African and Eurasian Affairs for the Jamestown Foundation as saying:

“In [Xinjiang], which is home to more than 10 million Uighurs, many attacks are not reported in the media. But [even] if you look at only reported attacks, well over several hundred people have been killed in attacks with mobs using daggers and even individuals using car and suitcase bombings in public plazas and train stations. While originally the agitation in Xinjiang was ethno-nationalist, I think it would be fair to say that, like the Chechen case, now the ideology is mostly moving toward the Salafist jihadist trend [...]

There has been a rise in attacks in Xinjiang in terms of numbers of participants involved and sophistication. Many attacks go unreported, in part because China does not want to attract media attention and hype up these attacks. But also there have been attacks in Kunming, Beijing’s Tiananmen Square and other parts of eastern China, so this can no longer be treated as an ‘only in Xinjiang’ conflict.” (Al-Monitor, 9 September 2015)

Narramore’s chapter in the book *Violence and the State* by Killingsworth, Sussex and Pakulski (November 2015) provides an historical overview of the government security measures in the XUAR:

“In Xinjiang there has been a steady (if low-level) series of violent clashes between Uyghurs and local authorities since the late 1980s. Among the most serious were the Baren ‘incident’ of April 1990 and the Ghulja (Yining) ‘incident’ of February 1997. Official accounts of the most serious events retrospectively portray them as examples of Islamic terrorism carried out by various East Turkestan movements. The state’s ‘strike hard’ (*yanda*) anti-crime campaigns, conducted every year in Xinjiang since 1996, which are designed to prevent or respond to anti-government Uyghur demonstrations or protests, appear to exacerbate tensions and provoke further protest. They are often combined with broad security sweeps to warn against separatist activity or detain people for questioning.” (Narramore, November 2015)

“[T]he state’s crackdown on separatism continued through the 1990s and the CPC seized the opportunity of the 9/11 attacks upon the US to exploit the most uncompromising boundary category of ‘terrorism’ in framing its nationalities problems. Those accused of the so-called ‘three evils’ of ‘terrorism, separatism (or splittism) and religious extremism’ experience longer prison terms, a higher rate of death sentences and more frequent violent conflict with state authorities than any other perceived threats to national security. The resort to ‘counterinsurgency’ tactics in response to separatist threats underscores the gravity of the problem from the state’s standpoint, notwithstanding a degree of political opportunism that exaggerates security threats in a post-9/11 context. More importantly, the continued application of the most intensive state violence in dealing with minority populations exposes persistent failures in the PRC’s national unification and ‘multi-national’ state.” (Narramore, November 2015)

The US Department of State (USDOS) notes in its April 2016 *Country Report on Human Rights Practices*, which covers the year 2015:

“Officials in the XUAR continued to implement a pledge to crack down on the government-designated “three evil forces” of religious extremism, ethnic separatism, and violent terrorism, and they outlined efforts to launch a concentrated antiseparatist re-education campaign. Some police raids, arbitrary detentions, and judicial punishments, ostensibly directed at individuals or organizations suspected of promoting the “three evil forces,” appeared to target groups or individuals peacefully seeking to express their political or religious views. The government continued to repress Uighurs expressing peaceful political dissent and independent Muslim religious leaders, often citing counterterrorism as the reason for taking action. Officials continued to use the threat of violence as justification for extreme security measures directed at the local population, journalists, and visiting foreigners.” (USDOS, 13 April 2016, section 6)

In a June 2015 article that appeared in the Wall Street Journal (WSJ), Michael Clarke, an associate professor at the Australian National University (ANU) with a research focus on the politics of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), describes the central government’s responses to recent violence in the region:

“Beijing rapidly increased Xinjiang’s internal security budget to some \$1 billion at the beginning of 2014, while President Xi Jinping has instituted a special committee on China’s new National Security Council to specifically deal with security and counterterrorism strategies in Xinjiang.

The authorities have also ramped up repressive measures in the region, with Xinjiang CCP Chairman Zhang Chuxian calling for a ‘people’s war’ in which the state will ‘exterminate’ the ‘savage and evil separatists’ who are influenced and directed by foreign ‘extremists.’ This has entailed not only accelerated arrests and trials of suspected ‘terrorists’—including public, mass sentencing rallies of Uighur suspects—but also continued sweeps of Uighur neighborhoods and mosques in search of potential militants and their weapons. Furthermore, there is continued suspicion, and control of, outward signs of religiosity such as mosque attendance and wearing of veils.

Along with using such ‘hard’ measures, authorities in Xinjiang have embarked upon less repressive ones to explicitly weaken Islam. There are reports of county-level regulations in southern Xinjiang that compel shop owners to stock both alcohol and cigarettes and advertise them through ‘eye-catching displays.’ Authorities have also attempted to elicit the assistance of ordinary Uighurs in apprehending suspected militants through the offer of financial rewards for ‘tip-offs’ to police regarding suspicious individuals and activities.” (Clarke, 25 June 2015)

A June 2015 article of the Diplomat, a Tokyo-based online international news magazine covering politics, notes on implications of the “People’s War on Terror” and “strike hard” campaigns announced in 2014:

“After the terrorist attacks in Beijing and Kunming, surveillance and troop deployments have increased both inside and outside of Xinjiang. In May 2014, the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region party secretary Zhang Chunxian called for a ‘people’s war on terror’ (反恐维稳的人民战争). Shortly after, Minister of Public Security Guo Shengkun announced a so-called ‘strike hard’ campaign (严打) to crack down on ‘terrorist elements.’ Xi Jinping declared that in order to stabilize Xinjiang, the state’s surveillance nets needed to ‘spread from the earth to the sky.’

Since then, more surveillance methods to control communication channels have been implemented to ‘maintain stability’ (维稳). In late 2014, Minister Guo announced a new big data-based surveillance initiative, specifically targeting Uyghur activists and terrorist groups. Also, more than 30 million CCTV cameras are currently in use across the country, at least 40,000 of which are found in Xinjiang’s streets, public places, and in mosques.

The ‘People’s War on Terror’ also includes the mobilization of the population, including Uyghurs, to help the authorities hunt terrorists and to pass on information about suspects and alleged ‘terrorists.’ Over the course of 2014, non-state media have reported increased surveillance of Muslim minorities all across the country, as well as arbitrary detentions and forced ‘repatriations’ of Uyghurs living outside of Xinjiang. Chinese cities have also been reported as restricting cultural and religious practices, such as religious fasting, as well as wearing long beards and head scarfs. Hundreds of Uyghurs were detained and sentenced under suspicion of terrorism-related crimes. While many of the reported violent incidents in Xinjiang are unquestionably terrorist acts, some human rights groups and Uyghur activists accuse China of deliberately blurring the line between terrorism and local insurgencies in order to justify harsh security measures. Since both terror and political dissent are subject to strict media censorship, they may only be covered by state media — which usually releases very few details on incidents of either nature.” (The Diplomat, 1 June 2015)

Meanwhile, a March 2016 Reuters report quotes Zhang Chunxian, the Xinjiang CPC party secretary, as saying that “violent terrorist incidents have dropped significantly” during the previous year, while admitting that the conditions for fighting terrorism and ensuring stability in the XUAR remained “complex”. As the article notes, the authorities have “blamed the unrest on Islamist militants”, whereas “rights groups and exiles” attribute the unrest more to “anger at Chinese controls on the religion and culture” of the Uyghurs. Referring to reports from human rights organisations, the article states that the state “has never presented convincing evidence of the existence of a cohesive militant group fighting the government”. (Reuters, 8 March 2016)

The same article further refers to human rights organisations as saying that some attacks in the past have “not been reported until days or even weeks after they happened” (Reuters, 8 March 2016).

An October 2015 article of the Guardian newspaper quotes James Leibold of La Trobe University (Australia) as saying that severe security restrictions made it impossible to discern whether the security situation in the XUAR was “deteriorating or even improving as a result of

Beijing's crackdown and attempts to co-opt disaffected Uighurs". According to Leibold, "it was possible [that] Beijing had achieved an uneasy short-term stability [...] [b]y pumping huge resources into Xinjiang". (Guardian, 9 October 2015)

In a January 2016 report, iJet International, a private US-based risk management firm that serves corporate clients, assesses the security situation in the XUAR as follows:

"The security situation remains fragile in China's Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region despite officials concluding the 'strike hard' counterterrorism campaign [...]. The government is maintaining a heavy security presence throughout the region, and continues to implement controversial regulations aimed at countering the spread of extremist viewpoints. Regulations on religious expression have only furthered tensions, especially in western Xinjiang.

Though major security incidents decreased significantly in 2015, the region continues to experience periodic attacks, especially in areas west and south of the Turpan Basin where anti-government sentiment runs high. A group of men attacked the Sogon colliery in Aksu Prefecture, prompting a 56-day operation that resulted in the deaths of 28 purported extremists. Minor clashes between Uighurs and security forces have continued sporadically, allegedly in response to police actions. Clashes broke out in Moyu (Qaraqash) county in Hetian Prefecture March 9 when officers reportedly stopped seven Uighur men near a restaurant for suspicious activity; at least seven Uighurs and one police officer were killed in the incident. Other recent incidents have followed similar patterns in which police attempts to search residents end in clashes, and sometimes deaths.

Police and military personnel have maintained an offensive posture in major cities, especially in Xinjiang's capital Urumqi and Kashgar; security is also tight near railway stations and other transportation hubs. Such security measures, including the possibility of personal searches on public transport such as Urumqi Diwopu International Airport (URC), are likely to remain in place in the near term. Authorities continue to conduct daily patrols throughout hot spots such as Aksu, Hetian (Hotan), and Kashgar prefectures. Security personnel continue to conduct raids in villages on a regular basis. Surveillance has been even further increased, with cameras and police stationed near religious buildings and public areas. Additionally, roadblocks have been reported on highways throughout Xinjiang; officials have conducted car searches, checked identification, and screen mobile phones for illegal social media and/or virtual private network applications. Officials could also temporarily suspend mobile services, particularly in the aftermath of any attack.

Several major attacks and riots throughout the region have reportedly occurred after security personnel have not respected Uighur cultural and religious traditions, usually by forcing men to cut or shave their beards or refusing to allow females to wear burkas." (iJet International, 12 January 2016)

The Financial Times (FT) writes in a November 2015 article:

“The ruling Communist party blames ETIM for a series of attacks across China in recent years by ethnic Uighurs, a Muslim minority group from the western Chinese desert region of Xinjiang, many of whom support independence for their homeland. In the immediate aftermath of the September 11 2001 attacks on the US, China convinced Washington and the UN to place ETIM on a list of terrorist organisations. But despite a series of increasingly bloody attacks in recent years, human rights groups and most other countries say China does not provide adequate evidence to prove that these attacks are co-ordinated by ETIM or any other functioning terrorist group. Rights groups argue that most of the attacks by Uighurs, virtually all of which have been carried out with knives or crude explosives, are spontaneous acts of homegrown terror perpetrated by desperate young people with grievances against Chinese rule.” (FT, 17 November 2015)

A February 2016 report of the Jamestown Foundation (JF), a Washington, D.C.-based institute for research and analysis on strategic issues, notes that since the 9/11 attacks of 2001, the Chinese authorities have attributed many violent incidents in the XUAR to terrorist organisations based abroad, including the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) and its successor organisation, the Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP) which have been present along the Afghan-Pakistani tribal areas and have had an “evolving relationship with the Taliban and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)”. Meanwhile, the same report states that “[a]fter 2009, Beijing began to shift some of its focus to the potential links of Uyghur militants with groups beyond the ‘Af-Pak’ [Afghanistan-Pakistan] region” (JF, 4 February 2016).

With regard to the local prevalence of violent incidents within the Xinjiang region, a January 2015 article of The Diplomat states that aside from the July 2009 unrest in Urumqi during which nearly 200 people were killed (which is referred to as the “worst documented outbreak of violence” in at least two decades), “the majority of violent incidents have occurred in the Uighur-centric population belt arcing through Western and Southwestern Xinjiang, in particular the area around the city of Kashgar”. Meanwhile, northern Xinjiang has been “remarkably quiet, despite hosting reasonably large population centers”. As the article posits, “it is likely that the quiet in these areas stems from the fact that these communities are newer and primarily populated by Han”. The article further states that “[s]erious mass casualty incidents have also occurred in Urumqi (May 2014 market bombing), Luntai, and in the Turpan area southeast of Urumqi”. (The Diplomat, 23 January 2015)

The same article goes on to say:

“The Chinese government’s security apparatus is striking hard in Xinjiang, with increasingly frequent kinetic police actions and nearly weekly announcements of long prison sentences and death sentences being handed down to suspected ‘separatists’. The frequency of violent incidents has risen sharply in the past 18 months, with security force actions, Uighur attacks on security forces and facilities, and insurgent attacks on railway stations and markets accounting for the bulk of the death toll since the first quarter of 2013 [...]. [...] Lethal attacks on security forces and police facilities increased sharply in the summer of 2013 and have trended strongly upward since then.” (The Diplomat, 23 January 2015)



The same article notes on the ethnic affiliations of victims of various types of violent incidents:

“While making clear ethnic identifications is tough because of a lack of details in most media reports of incidents, Uighurs account for the overwhelming majority of deaths from security force actions, attacks on police and police facilities, and security forces firing on demonstrators. Deaths from ‘other attacks’ and large-scale ethnic violence are primarily a mix of Uighurs and Han.” (The Diplomat, 23 January 2015)

As the Jamestown Foundation (JF) reports, the National People’s Congress approved the country’s new counter-terrorism law on 27 December 2015. This legislation, as the JF indicates, establishes “a legal basis for counterterrorism operations” as well as “the authorities delegated to the security services for that mission”. (JF, 25 January 2016)

A December 2015 report of the state-run Xinhua news agency provides details about the passage of the counter-terrorism law and some of its key implications:

“China’s top legislature on Sunday adopted the country’s first counter-terrorism law in the latest attempt to address terrorism at home and help maintain world security. Lawmakers approved the legislation Sunday afternoon at the end of a week-long bimonthly session of the National People’s Congress (NPC) Standing Committee. [...]

The [...] counter-terrorism law proposed a national leading organ for counter-terrorism work, which will be in charge of identifying terrorist activities and personnel, and coordinate nationwide anti-terrorist work. The state will provide necessary financial support for key regions listed in the country’s counter-terrorist plan, whereas professional anti-terrorist forces will be established by public security, national security authorities as well as armed forces. A national intelligence center will be established to coordinate inter-departmental and trans-regional efforts on counter-terrorism intelligence and information.

The term ‘terrorism’ is defined as any proposition or activity -- that, by means of violence, sabotage or threat, generates social panic, undermines public security, infringes on personal and property rights, and menaces government organs and international organizations -- with the aim to realize certain political and ideological purposes. [...]

The law establishes basic principles for counter-terrorism work and strengthens measures of prevention, handling, punishment as well as international cooperation, he said.” (Xinhua, 27 December 2015)

For information about provisions of the new counter-terrorism law pertaining to the dissemination of information on issues relating to “terrorism”, please [see section 0](#). of this compilation (“Freedom of expression”).

As The Diplomat reports in a January 2016 article, “China’s first comprehensive anti-terrorism bill” took effect on 1 January 2016 (The Diplomat, 23 January 2016).

Referring to the Committee of Political and Legal Affairs of the CPC Central Committee, a December 2015 article of China Daily, a state-owned English language newspaper, reports that the government has announced the following nine national anti-terrorism guidelines with the aim to coordinate security forces across China:

- “1. Strengthen the nationwide terrorist intelligence-sharing system;
2. Destroy audio and video material related to terrorism and violence, and prevent the spread of terrorist information via instant messaging services or other online means;
3. Strengthen border controls to prevent overseas terrorists entering China;
4. Eliminate religious extremism and strengthen management of religious affairs in accordance with the law;
5. Promote successful practices to educate and transform terrorist offenders by using authentic religious doctrines;
6. Improve the emergency command system and enhance coordination among different units of the public security forces and other forces to maintain social stability;
7. Enhance anti-terrorism measures relating to railways, aviation, other public transportation and postal networks;
8. Conduct research to determine weak links in anti-terrorism work;
9. Strengthen cooperation with international anti-terrorism bodies and provide maximum protection for overseas Chinese individuals and enterprises.” (China Daily, 14 December 2015)

A January 2016 article by Radio Free Asia (RFA) notes that “[t]ight security restrictions” in ethnic Uyghur areas of the XUAR have been extended into 2016 and, referring to an unnamed local police source, provides specific details about security patrols in a township in Xinjiang’s Hotan (Hetian) prefecture:

“Tight security restrictions in ethnic Uyghur areas of northwestern China’s restive Xinjiang region are being extended into the new year, with police carrying out daily patrols in villages and checking the identification of worshippers at mosques, Uyghur sources say. Patrols in one township in Guma (in Chinese, Pishan) county in the western prefecture of Hotan (Hetian) are now carried out ‘day and night,’ a Mokuyla township police officer told RFA’s Uyghur Service. ‘In our patrols, we include one official policeman, three members of the auxiliary police, and 10 militia members from each village that we inspect,’ RFA’s source said, speaking on condition of anonymity. ‘At night, we patrol until 2:00 a.m., and we stop anyone found walking around so that we can check their backgrounds and identification,’ he said, adding that daytime patrols also look in on at least five village families each day.” (RFA, 6 January 2016)

### 3.1.2 Non-state actors

*East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM)/East Turkestan Islamic Party (ETIP)/Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP)*

Some sources state that the names Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) and (East) Turkestan Islamic Party (ETIP or TIP) refer to the same organization/group (BND, undated; China Daily, 24 December 2008; GlobalSecurity.org, 7 September 2011a; Insite, 2010). However, other sources treat the ETIM and the TIP as separate (though affiliated) entities (CACI-SRSP, 5 February 2014; CFR, 4 September 2014).

This question is addressed in a September 2014 Backgrounder report of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR):

“Some experts say ETIM is an umbrella organization for many splinter groups, including ones that operate in Pakistan and central Asia. The Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP), for instance, is one of the most prominent groups, formed in 2006 by Uighurs who fled to Afghanistan and Pakistan in the 1990s. That group took credit for a series of attacks in several Chinese cities in 2008, including deadly bus explosions in Shanghai and Kunming. [...]

Ben N. Venzke, head of the U.S.-based independent terrorism-monitoring firm IntelCenter, says it is unclear whether the TIP is separate from ETIM, but notes that the groups’ objectives are both Islamist and nationalist.

Others are not convinced. Omer Kanat, senior editor of the Uighur service for U.S.-funded Radio Free Asia, says the TIP may not even be a Xinjiang-based Uighur group. He suggests a possible affiliation between the TIP and the Islamic Party of Turkestan, formerly known as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).” (CFR, 4 September 2014)

A December 2008 article of the state-run China Daily newspaper states that ETIM is “also known as the East Turkistan Islamic Party, Allah Party or the East Turkistan National Revolution Association” (China Daily, 24 December 2008). This view, however, is contested by other sources (see below).

A September 2014 *Backgrounder* of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) provides a brief overview of the origins and purported objectives of the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), which is referred to as a “Muslim separatist group founded by militant Uighurs” about which “reliable information [...] is hard to come by”:

“The first mention of ETIM surfaced around 2000, when a Russian newspaper reported that Osama bin Laden had pledged funds to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and ETIM during a 1999 meeting in Afghanistan. Reportedly founded by Hasan Mahsum, a Uighur from Xinjiang’s Kashgar region, ETIM has been listed by the State Department as one of the more extreme separatist groups. It seeks an independent state called East Turkestan that would cover an area including parts of Turkey, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan,

Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR).” (CFR, 4 September 2014)

A February 2014 article published in the *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, a publication of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and the Silk Road Studies Program (CACI-SRSP), a joint research and policy center based at Johns Hopkins University’s Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (author: Jacob Zenn, Jamestown Foundation, JF), notes that “there is no primary source evidence to support that any such group ever existed” (CACI-SRSP, 5 February 2014).

A November 2015 *Time* magazine article notes differing perceptions of the existence and the nature of ETIM:

“Some foreign scholars who study the Uighurs have cast doubt on the notion that ETIM, the group singled out by President Xi, is orchestrating the string of attacks in China — even going so far as to dismiss the existence of ETIM as an operational unit. International academics have also questioned whether Uighur militants are truly part of a global jihadi network, instead recasting their violent campaign as an outgrowth of a localized struggle for autonomy (or separation) from the Chinese state. For its part, Beijing points to the fact that a couple dozen Uighurs were locked up in Guantanamo by the Americans — after they were discovered in Afghanistan in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks — as evidence of Uighur complicity in a larger extremist movement. Someone using ETIM’s name did claim responsibility for bloodshed in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square in 2013, when an SUV careened through the crowds killing five people, including the three Uighur occupants of the vehicle. There have been few reports, outside of Chinese state media, however, of Uighurs joining ISIS.” (*Time*, 23 November 2015)

In a November 2013 overview of the group, *BBC News* states that ETIM is a “small Islamic separatist group” that is “said to be active in Xinjiang province in western China”. The same report cites the US Department of State (USDOS) as referring to ETIM in 2006 as “the most militant of the ethnic Uighur separatist groups” and that its aim is to establish an independent “East Turkestan” in China (*BBC News*, 1 November 2013).

According to the December 2008 *China Daily* article, ETIM aims to “establish a theocratic ‘Eastern Turkistan Islamic State’” in the XUAR (*China Daily*, 24 December 2008).

The November 2013 *BBC News* report goes on to mention that “ETIM was reportedly founded by Hasan Mahsum, an Uighur from Xinjiang’s Kashgar region” (killed in Pakistan in 2003) and later led by Abdul Haq (reportedly killed in Pakistan in 2010). The same source notes that “[t]he scope of ETIM’s activities is not clear”. (*BBC News*, 1 November 2013)

Meanwhile, a research report published by the Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre (NOREF), an Oslo-based independent think tank, in August 2014 (authored by Pakistani journalist Zia Ur Rehman) states that “[o]ther reports suggest that the group is interested in creating a new ‘East Turkestan’ state that would include portions of Turkey, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Xinjiang” (NOREF, August 2014).

The BBC states that “[v]iolent attacks attributed to ETIM tend to be small-scale”, citing reports by correspondents as saying that there are questions about the group’s capacity to organise any terrorist attacks of a larger scale in China. The same BBC report goes on to note that ETIM was responsible for several bomb attacks in Xinjiang during the 1990s and cites US reports as saying that in 2002, two members of ETIM were deported from Krygyzstan to China for “plotting to attack the [...] US embassy” in Bishkek. (BBC News, 1 November 2013)

The US Department of State (USDOS) notes two more recent events attributed to ETIM in its July 2012 *Country Report on Terrorism 2011*:

“In 2011 ETIM claimed responsibility for two violent acts primarily targeting government officials. On July 18, an attack on a police station in Hotan, Xinjiang claimed the lives of four and left four others injured. On July 30 and 31, a series of bomb and knife attacks in Kashgar left at least 12 dead and over 40 injured.” (USDOS, 31 July 2012, chapter 2)

The BBC News report of November 2013 states that while the government “often blames ETIM or ETIM-inspired groups for outbreaks of violence in Xinjiang, [...] details are hard to confirm”, with “differing accounts of the cause of the violence - that point to ethnic and religious tensions rather than extremism - [sometimes] emerg[ing] subsequently”. As the BBC notes, after the October 2013 Tiananman Square car crash (details see below in [section 3.2](#) of this compilation), a spokesperson of the Chinese foreign ministry referred to ETIM as “the most immediate and realistic security threat in China”. Meanwhile, the same report refers to Michael Clarke [currently an associate professor at the Australian National University (ANU)] saying to the Agence France-Presse (AFP) news agency that “[i]t’s not that China shouldn’t be concerned [about ETIM’s ties to Pakistan and central Asian countries], but the core issue is that the linkages have been exaggerated by the Chinese government.” (BBC News, 1 November 2013).

The August 2014 NOREF research report notes that “in 2014[,] the Chinese authorities claimed that ETIM was behind the May 22nd attack in Urumqi, the April 30th suicide bombing of the railway station in Urumqi and the March 1st attack on the Kunming railway station.” (NOREF, August 2014)

The November 2013 BBC news report informs about the US government’s designation of ETIM:

“ETIM is designated as a terrorist group by the US under Executive Order 13224, an order designed to block financial transactions with groups linked to terrorism, and the US Terrorists Exclusion List, which allows the US to prevent individuals linked with terrorist organisations from entering the US. However, it is not listed as a terrorist group on the State Department’s main list of Foreign Terrorist Organisations.” (BBC News, 1 November 2013)

According to the August 2014 NOREF report, ETIM is “associated with the Turkistan Islamic Party, the East Turkistan Islamic Party, the East Turkestan Islamic Party of Allah and the East Turkistan National Revolution Association” (NOREF, August 2014).

A February 2015 Foreign Policy (FP) article notes that “it is unclear” whether ETIM “comprises a distinct, self-identified terrorist entity or a looser grouping of individuals” (FP, 9 February 2015).

The same FP article goes on to discuss claims that Uyghur “extremists” from China have been fighting for ISIS in Iraq and Syria:

“Chinese government-run Global Times asserted in December that about 300 Chinese ‘extremists’ were fighting alongside ISIS in Iraq and Syria, and in January that another 300 had traveled to Malaysia en route to joining the group. The reports suggested that many were ‘terrorists from the East Turkestan Islamic Movement.’ [...]

Many experts dismiss Global Times’s numbers. ‘I assume there are Uighurs joining ISIS, but I also assume the numbers are quite small in comparison to other groups throughout the world,’ said Sean Roberts, a George Washington University professor who studies the minority group. ‘We’re probably talking about 20 to 30 people max.’ Nicholas Bequelin, a Hong-Kong-based senior researcher with Human Rights Watch, called Chinese media’s figure of 300 ‘implausibly high.’ [...]

China isn’t wholly inventing the threat. Propaganda material from a group China links to ETIM that calls itself the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) suggests there are at least 30 to 40 Uighur jihadis in Syria and Iraq, according to Washington Institute for Near East Policy fellow Aaron Zelin, who runs the website Jihadology.net. TIP has an increasingly active online presence that includes footage of young children firing guns in mountain valleys. In recent years, it has also claimed responsibility for attacks like the Tiananmen Square SUV incident via videos in which its purported leader, Abdullah Mansour, has called for more attacks.

But many researchers doubt TIP’s claims, as its accounts of attacks often contradict facts on the ground that don’t seem to indicate the sophistication of internationally organized terrorist operations. The general consensus, according to Georgetown professor James Millward, is that radicalized Uighur expats, who mostly seem to be based in Pakistan rather than Iraq and Syria, haven’t provided any operational support for recent violence in China, but rather just propaganda. And any who are fighting with Middle Eastern jihadi groups don’t seem to be rising very high in their ranks, said Raffaello Pantucci, an analyst at London’s Royal United Services Institute.” (FP, 9 February 2015)

Referring to the April 1990 Baren incident (see above), Millward (2007) cites “internal” Chinese sources (i.e. publications intended for circulation inside China only) as indicating that “a group led by Zeydin Yusup and known by the name of East Turkestan Islamic Party (ETIP) planned a series of synchronised attacks on government buildings in the Akto and Kashgar area” starting in March 1990 (Millward, 2007, pp. 325-326).

An undated overview under the heading “Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP)”, which includes information up to April 2015, is provided on the website of the German Federal Intelligence Service (Bundesnachrichtendienst, BND). This refers to the TIP as an Uyghur terrorist organization founded in the late 1990s under the name “East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM)”, which is the name used in China to refer to the organization today. This is also the name under which the group has been listed as a terrorist organization by the UN and the USA since 2002. While the TIP’s main objective is the liberation of East Turkestan (XUAR), it also pursues a global jihadist agenda, on which grounds it has joined the fight alongside the Taliban and al-Qaeda. The TIP is based in Badakhshan (Afghanistan) where it has a fighting force of 600 or 700, more than half of whom are Uyghurs. The group’s current leader (Emir) is Abdallah Mansur, and his deputy is Abdul Haq al-Turkestani. In its publications, the TIP emphasizes that it is affiliated with al-Qaeda. Since 2012, some 900 TIP fighters have been involved in the Syrian conflict, fighting alongside the Jabhat al-Nusra groups linked to al-Qaeda. However, the TIP sees itself as an independent fighting force which is not subordinated to any larger group or organization, although it considers itself associated with Jabhat al-Nusra. Up to 2012, terrorist attacks planned by the TIP inside China or against Chinese interests abroad were rarely carried out successfully. However, there has been a steady rise in security-related incidents involving Uyghurs and Han Chinese in Xinjiang, with the TIP carrying out larger attacks in Kunming (Yunnan Province) and Urumqi. (BND, undated)

A February 2014 article of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and the Silk Road Studies Program (CACI-SRSP) (author: Jacob Zenn, Jamestown Foundation) refers to the TIP as a group that emerged as late as 2006. The article states that while the TIP “traces its legacy to Hassan Mahsum”, the alleged founder of ETIM (see above), it was founded under Abdul Haq in 2006. The same article provides the following overview of the group’s subsequent leaders and public statements:

“Its first video was called ‘Jihad in Turkistan’ and released in 2006. Future videos, however, were produced by the TIP media wing, Islom Awazi (Voice of Islam) and discussed themes such the history of Muslims in China, the ‘crimes’ of the Communist Chinese against Uighur culture, women and Islam, and broader themes, such as ‘liberating’ Palestine. Since 2012, the TIP has also co-issued videos with the media wing of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which is called Jund Allah Studios.

In 2008, the TIP also began publishing its quarterly Arabic-language publication under the editor Abdullah Mansour, which is called ‘Islamic Turkistan’ and is now in its 13th edition. After the death of Abdul Haq’s successor, Abdul Shakoob Turkistani, in 2012, Mansour emerged as the TIP’s leader. Since 2012, the TIP has issued increasingly frequent videos praising attacks in Xinjiang [...].

[...] The TIP’s claims to be supporting the Syrian rebels with ‘humanitarian aid,’ TIP materials that appear on the websites of Turkish Uighur organizations, and the existence of Turks fighting with the TIP in Pakistan and Uyghurs fighting with the Syrian rebels suggests that there may be some lingering connections between Uighur militants and Turkish organizations. [...]

[T]he TIP represents a minority of Uighur organizations around the world in that it promotes Jihad against China, openly affiliates with al-Qaeda and supports suicide attacks against U.S. troops in Afghanistan and on Chinese security forces in China.

However, in 2013 the TIP is for the first time gaining international media coverage alongside the pro-democracy and pro-human rights Uighur organizations, such as the World Uyghur Congress. This is affording the TIP a voice to represent the Uyghurs, which used to be exclusively the domain of Western-based Uighur groups. For example, the TIP got much of the media attention after a suicide attack in Tiananmen Square in October 2013 was carried out by an Uighur husband, wife, and mother, who were reportedly seeking revenge against China for the government's refusal to allow the family to build a mosque in Xinjiang. Reuters and the Guardian reported Mansour's claim that the attack was a 'jihadi operation' and the result of an Uighur 'awakening' after sixty years of Chinese oppression." (CACI-SRSP, 5 February 2014)

Another discussion of a group referred to as TIP can be found in a September 2015 Al-Monitor article which states that the group is "mostly made up of Uighur [...] leaders and militants" and has been seen praising attacks in China. While the article notes that the TIP is reportedly involved in the Syrian conflict, it states that it is likely that the TIP is still seeking to achieve independence for Xinjiang. The same article goes on to quote Jacob Zenn of the Jamestown Foundation as noting that the TIP views "the Chinese as 'kuffar,' [infidels] who deserve to be killed". (Al-Monitor, 9 September 2015)

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

A few references could be found on a group named *East Turkestan Liberation Organisation (ETLO)* (Reed/Raschke 2010, pp. 35-36; GlobalSecurity.org, 7 September 2011b).

An overview of the East Turkistan Liberation Organization (ETLO) (Uyghur: Shärqiy Türkistan Azatliq Tëshkilati, SHAT) is provided by Reed and Raschke in their 2010 book *The ETIM*:

"The East Turkistan Liberation Organization (ETLO), aka Shärqiy Türkistan Azatliq Tëshkilati (SHAT). This was probably the most prominent of the Uyghur militant groups until the U.S: blacklisting raised the ETIM from obscurity. The PRC blames the ETLO for a long list of incidents dating back more than a decade. [...]

The ETLO's funding allegedly comes from armed robbery, drug trafficking, arms smuggling, and Al-Qaida donations. The PRC claims the ETLO trained and fought in Chechnya and ran special training camps at Mazar-e-Sharif and Khost, Afghanistan, with Taliban support. The ETLO also allegedly provided funds and personnel to the IMU in 1999.

The ETLO and ETIM are occasionally confused with each other. The PRC claims that the two groups established an alliance at a four-day meeting in Bishkek in March 1998. The ETLO leader, Mehmet Emin Hazret, has denied any association with the ETIM, Al-Qaida, or Osama bin Laden. [...]



The ETLO released a threatening video on the Internet in October 2005, just before the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. In the video, three masked men holding automatic weapons and standing in front of the East Turkistani flag read a statement saying that the group will launch an all-out war against China's government. Observers in the West have heard little from the ETLO since the 2005 video. Some analysts question whether the group still exists." (Reed/Raschke, 2010, pp. 35-36)

*East Turkistan Islamic Party of Allah (ETIPA) (Uyghur: Doğu Türkistan İslamcı Allah Partisi; alternative English renderings: East Turkestan Islamic Party of God, East Turkistan Islamic Hezbollah)*

Some sources refer to an East Turkestan Islamic Party of Allah (ETIPA) or East Turkistan Islamic Hezbollah (China Daily, 24 December 2008; Insite, 2010) as a group that is identical with ETIM. Meanwhile, Reed and Raschke (2010) point out that the East Turkestan Islamic Party of Allah (ETIPA) is "sometimes confused with ETIM" (Reed/Raschke, 2010, p. 39).

Bovingdon (July 2010)'s discussion of events in the 1990s refers to Chinese sources as claiming that the leader of the East Turkestan Islamic Party of Allah (ETIPA), Pâyzulla, "had begun infiltrating Ghulja in early 1996, planning for the [Ghulja] demonstration in January 1997 (Bovingdon, July 2010, p. 126). As Reed and Raschke note in their 2010 book, ETIPA was "reportedly founded by Alerken Abula in 1993 and crushed by the PRC in 2001" (Reed/Raschke, 2010, p. 39).

### *3.1.3 State security forces*

A June 2015 article of The Diplomat notes that "[c]ounter-terrorism units of the PAP [People's Armed Police], the People's Liberation Army, and the regular police force" are stationed in Xinjiang and other regions, and are permanently held on stand-by". Among these forces, the paramilitary PAP "has emerged as China's most important asset in its fight against terror", the article says. (The Diplomat, 1 June 2015)

As the Jamestown Foundation (JF) states in a January 2016 article, the December 2015 counterterrorism law, effective as of January 2016, "outlines a broad set of authorities and practices for the Ministry of State Security (MSS), the Ministry of Public Security (MPS), and other parts of the political-legal apparatus." Amongst others, the law contains provisions relating to an "operations system focused on creating and implementing counterterrorism policy". The system would "bring together counterterrorism elements of the MSS, MPS, and possibly the People's Armed Police under a quasi-autonomous structure". (JF, 25 January 2016)

### *People's Liberation Army (PLA)*

In a chapter contributed to Starr's 2004 book *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, Yitzhak Shichor, professor of Political Science and Asian Studies at the University of Haifa and Emeritus at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Israel), notes that "Xinjiang may

have no more than 50,000 to 60,000 regular troops, or one soldier per 35 to 40 sq. km". Thus, he writes, "in contrast to what is widely believed, PLA forces in Xinjiang are relatively few and spread very thinly" (Shichor, 2004, pp. 122-123).

As China Central Television (CCTV), the country's predominant state TV broadcaster, reported in February 2016, the Defence Ministry announced that the PLA will be reorganized into five new "strategic zones" that will replace the former seven military regions:

"The new structure regroups the former seven separate Military Region Commands into five new Battle Zone Commands – they are the North, South, East, West and Central Battle Zone Commands. All are supervised by the top Central Military Commission, chaired by President Xi Jinping. Each Command will be responsible for certain strategic directions and priorities. [...]

The new command system has three tiers: -- the Central Military Commission, the Battle Zone Commands, and the troops, an administration system from the top down through various branches to the troops." (CCTV, 2 February 2016)

In their 2010 book *Ethnic Identity and National Conflict in China*, Rohan Gunaratna, Arabinda Acharya and Pengxin Wang, academics at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies at Nanyang Technological University (Singapore), discuss the role of the PLA in combating Uyghur separatism and "terrorism":

"Since the late 1990s, Chinese authorities have been more familiar with the challenges they confront in Xinjiang. [...]

Gradually, the role of the PLA in combating Uighur separatism and terrorism evolved from passive support functions to active deterrence especially since 2001. [...] After the September 2011 incidents and the subsequent U.S. rout of the Taliban and the Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, China moved an estimated 100,000 soldiers into Xinjiang, concentrating them on the border regions. [...] The mass presence of PLA troops was aimed at deterring the Uighur separatists in southern Xinjiang. This also successfully cut off the contact between the Uighur radicals inside China and the fighters fleeing the Afghan battlefield.

Today, several special units of PLA are the core forces for combating terrorism. The PLA anti-terrorist unit was built under China's comprehensive security program for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Earlier in 2007, the PLA established a security unit, consisting of army, navy, and air force personnel, for securing the Beijing Olympic Games." (Gunaratna/ Acharya/ Wang, 2010, p. 144)

"The People's Armed Police Force (PAPF) has become a more professional force increasingly capable of handling political unrest and terrorist attacks within China. As a component of China's armed forces, PAPF is under the dual leadership of the State Council and the Central Military Commission (CMC). The PAPF consists of the internal security force, border public security, firefighting, and security guard forces and various police forces. [...] [T]he quantity and quality of the PAPF in Xinjiang is still an open

question even among top military experts. The PAPF in Xinjiang include border guards, anti-riot troops, and anti-terrorism forces, which are charged with the fundamental task of maintaining stability in the region.” (Gunaratna/ Acharya/ Wang, 2010, p. 146)

A January 2015 China Daily article states that “China is strengthening its military power in its northwestern frontier region bordering Afghanistan and Central Asia.” The article elaborates on the PLA structure in Xinjiang:

“People’s Liberation Army troops based in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region will vigorously enforce border controls, according to their chief. [...] The Xinjiang military region is a regional command that covers Xinjiang and the Ali area in the west of the Tibet autonomous region. [...] Sources familiar with the Chinese military system said Xinjiang is the largest provincial-level military region in China. It has four deputy commanders and four deputy commissars, while other military regions normally have only one deputy commander and one deputy commissar. [...] Li Wei, an expert on anti-terrorism studies at the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, who shares the same name as the major general, said, ‘The PLA troops in Xinjiang will deal with large-scale terrorist forces. They will concentrate especially on those carrying firearms smuggled from Pakistan and Afghanistan, rather than on individual terrorist attacks.’” (China Daily, 23 January 2015)

#### *People’s Armed Police Force (PAPF)*

As James D. Seymour, a senior research scholar at Columbia University (USA) who is specialised in Chinese politics, and Richard Anderson (on whom no further information could be found), write in their 1998 book *New Ghosts, Old Ghosts: Prisons and Labor Reform Camps in China*, “[l]ocally, contingents of the People’s Armed Police are normally accountable to two superiors: their immediate superiors in the PAP, and the provincial Public Security Bureaus”. Thus, “in theory, the Xinjiang PAPs were accountable to Beijing”. However, the authors state, “the PAP has long been notorious for lack of any Party presence at the lower levels, and this is probably especially true in the northwest.” As regards the PAP’s activities in the XUAR, the authors note that “the regional People’s Armed Police’s most conspicuous role has been to repress Uyghur separatism.” (Seymour/Anderson, 1998, p. 82)

Shichor (2004) refers to the PLA units as the “real fighting forces” with regard to military combat, while the main duties of the bingtuan, the militia and the PAPF “relate to internal security and construction”. The role of the PAPF is explained as follows:

“Separated from the PLA in 1982 and subordinate, until early 1995, to the Ministry of Public Security, the PAPF is primarily responsible for internal security and border defense. In the early 1990, significant numbers of PLA border units along the northwestern and southwestern borders of Xinjiang were transferred to the PAPF.” (Shichor, 2004, p. 126)

Bovingdon (July 2010) notes that “in November 2008, the Central Military Commission in Beijing promoted the Xinjiang contingent of the People’s Armed Police from deputy to full corps command in order to ‘safeguard national security and social stability’ (Xinhua 2008)” (Bovingdon, July 2010, p. 133).

As the US Library of Congress (LoC) reports in its Global Legal Monitor, an online publication covering legal news and developments worldwide, in August 2009, “the Standing Committee of China’s National People’s Congress passed the Law on the People’s Armed Police, in seven chapters comprising 38 articles.” The law came into effect immediately. The laws contain chapters on “general provisions, tasks and official duties, obligations and rights, safeguards, supervision and inspection, legal liability, and supplementary provisions”. The law states that the PAPF is “to be led jointly by the State Council and the Central Military Commission (CMC) [of the CPC]”. As the LoC report notes, the PAPF’s security- and defence-related tasks under the law include:

- “1) armed guarding of state-stipulated objects, targets, and major activities;
- 2) armed defense of critical sites of key public facilities, enterprises, warehouses, water sources, irrigation works, electric power facilities, and communications hubs;
- 3) armed defense of bridges and roads in critical positions of principal communications arteries;
- 4) peripheral guarding of prisons and detention centers;
- 5) armed patrol of municipalities under the direct control of the central government and of the seats of provincial and autonomous region people’s governments, as well as of key regions of other major cities during special periods;
- 6) assisting public security organs, state security organs, judicial administrative organs, procuratorial organs, and adjudicative organs carry out tasks of arrest, pursuit and capture, deportation under escort, and escort according to law, and assisting other related agencies to carry out significant escort duties;
- 7) participating in handling rebellions, riots, serious violent criminal incidents, terrorist attacks, and other social safety-related incidents; and
- 8) other security protection tasks entrusted to them by the state (art. 7).” (LoC, 3 September 2009)

Meanwhile, the LoC report notes that the 2009 law also provides for some restrictions on the powers of the PAPF:

“The Law also imposes certain limits on the powers of armed police troops. It prohibits the armed police from illegally stripping or restricting other persons’ personal freedom; illegally searching the person, goods, means of communication, residence, or premises of other persons; covering up or conniving at illegal criminal activities; disclosing state secrets or military secrets; or committing other acts that violate the law or violate discipline (art. 19).” (LoC, 3 September 2009)

*Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC, often referred to as bingtuan)*

Shichor (2004) discusses the military and non-military aspects of the XPCC (bingtuan):

“[T]he 103,000–strong bingtuan initially absorbed some troops from the First Field Army, as well as the Guomindang (GMD) and the Ili National Army (INA; Eastern Turkistan Republic) troops. However, these were engaged almost exclusively in nonmilitary work and have over the years been largely retired. Most of the bingtuan now consists of Han civilians, migrated or sent to Xinjiang from other parts of China. Leaders and midlevel cadres are often demobilized soldiers who are at the same time reserve officers organized according to military structures and designated with military ranks. In spite of the military terminology, the bingtuan is by no means a military outfit and is not controlled by the PLA except possibly during unusual emergencies. While trained and supervised by the PLA, the militia is relatively small and by no means a fighting force. The same applies to the PAPF.” (Shichor, 2004, pp. 125-126)

An October 2014 White Paper of the State Council of the PRC, which provides details about the history of the XPCC, states that in order to confront what the paper refers to as a growing “threat” of the “three forces” (separatism, religious extremism and terrorism) since the 1980s, “divisions, regiments, companies, enterprises, and public institutions under the XPCC have established emergency militia battalions, companies, and platoons that enable it to respond rapidly to outbursts of violent terrorist activities”. The same White Paper claims that “[t]he XPCC has played crucial roles in fighting terrorism and maintaining stability”, indicating that following the Urumqi riots in July 2009, “the XPCC sent militias to patrol the city and guard key districts from possible attacks”. (State Council of the PRC, 5 October 2014)

An October 2014 Foreign Policy (FP) article notes that while the XPCC has a militia, it “does not replace the People’s Liberation Army or the local police”, both of which are active in the XUAR” (FP, 8 October 2014).

Zhu and Blachford (September 2015) write about the XPCC’s role in the defence and security domain:

“As an important force for political stability in Xinjiang and for consolidating frontier defence, Bingtuan has consistently followed the principle of equal importance of its economic and security/military functions. For frontier defence and state security, Bingtuan has a ‘four-in-one’ system of joint defence that links the PLA, Armed Police, Bingtuan and common citizens. While its original military units were changed to Armed Police from the 1980s, Bingtuan has maintained its military function to keep its reserve force and militia groups active. Overall, Bingtuan’s collective military forces have played an important role in the past 60 years in ‘repressing internal and external separatists’ attempts at sabotage and infiltration, and other terrorist or security threats’. In brief, Bingtuan’s military functions seem indispensable to the Chinese government as far as Xinjiang’s frontier security is concerned.” (Zhu/Blachford, 16 September 2015, p. 35)

### **3.2 Violent incidents 2013-2016**

In March 2016, Xinjiang’s party chief Zhang Chunxian claims that “the frequency of terrorist incidents in Xinjiang has dropped significantly” (Xinhua, 8 March 2016). The Strait Times, a

daily newspaper based in Singapore, also reports about Zhang Chunxian's comments on the security situation in March 2016:

"Terror activities have dropped off significantly in the restive Xinjiang region, but the local government said it will continue a 'high-pressure' security crackdown and other steps such as poverty alleviation, especially amid a slowing economy that might stir social unrest. Speaking yesterday on the sidelines of the national legislature session, Xinjiang party boss Zhang Chunxian said the security situation has improved markedly, thanks to the region's economic growth, among other factors. 'The situation in Xinjiang is becoming ever more stable. Local authorities have strengthened their ability to prevent and fight terrorist activity,' Mr Zhang said, without providing figures or a timeframe." (The Straits Times, 9 March 2016)

In 2016, Radio Free Asia's (RFA) Uyghur Service, which often acts a reference point for international media on security incidents in Xinjiang, reported only one relevant incident concerning the detention of a group of Uyghurs who failed to attend a funeral in March:

"More than 40 Uyghurs were detained last week because they failed to show up for a prominent Communist Party member's funeral in northwestern China's Xinjiang region, RFA's Uyghur Service has learned. Included among the 41 people detained by authorities are local religious leaders from Oymanbaytoqay village of Ghulja (In Chinese, Yining) County including the Imam Enver Hesin and the Muezzin Ekber Nesirdin, local residents told RFA. While local law-enforcement officials acknowledged they detained the Uyghurs, they said it was because they are religious extremists. Tursun Bilal, a police officer of Araosteng Township who oversees Oymanbaytoqay village, told RFA that failure to show up at the funeral for a teacher a Chinese Communist Party member surnamed Harun is a sure sign the 41 men are radicals. [...] Locals defended the men, saying they didn't have anything against the late Harun" (RFA, 24 March 2016)

No more reported security incidents could be found in 2016. However, in January 2016 RFA provides the following account of the security surveillance in the area:

"Tight security restrictions in ethnic Uyghur areas of northwestern China's restive Xinjiang region are being extended into the new year, with police carrying out daily patrols in villages and checking the identification of worshippers at mosques, Uyghur sources say. Patrols in one township in Guma (in Chinese, Pishan) county in the western prefecture of Hotan (Hetian) are now carried out 'day and night,' a Mokuyla township police officer told RFA's Uyghur Service. 'In our patrols, we include one official policeman, three members of the auxiliary police, and 10 militia members from each village that we inspect,' RFA's source said, speaking on condition of anonymity. 'At night, we patrol until 2:00 a.m., and we stop anyone found walking around so that we can check their backgrounds and identification,' he said, adding that daytime patrols also look in on at least five village families each day. 'We ask how many people currently live in their homes, whether any family members have left the area, and whether any fire hazards are present,' he said. Police also investigate residents' guests to see if they have come from out of town, with police confiscating visitors' identification cards until they have returned to their own homes, he said.' Village residents wishing to visit relatives or seek medical

treatment in other places must first obtain a letter from village police describing past political involvements, the officer said. ‘They will then bring that letter to our office, and we will enter everything into a data base,’ he said. ‘If we find nothing wrong, we will stamp the letter for approval, and they will then take that to the township’s political law office. There, they will receive their so-called ‘green card’ allowing them to travel,’ he said.” (RFA, 6 January 2016)

Freedom House writes in its *Annual Report on Political Rights and Civil Liberties* in January 2016 that “clashes have caused over 160 reported deaths since September 2014.” (Freedom House, 27 January 2016)

On 22 December 2015 human rights lawyer Pu Zhiqiang was given a three-year suspended jail sentence and was banned from practising law for the rest of his life for posting several critical messages on social media. Amongst other things, he criticised Chinese policy concerning the Uyghur minority in Xinjiang. The court charged him of “picking quarrels and provoking troubles” and “inciting ethnic hatred”. (AI, 24 February 2016; BAMF, 4 January 2016)

Media reported on a major security incident in Xinjiang related to an attack at a coal mine in Aksu on 18 September 2015 (Reuters, 1 October 2015; Guardian, 1 October 2015). The death toll of the attack remains unclear. Most media reports that were published several days after the incident are referring to Radio Free Asia (RFA) which claims that at least 50 people were killed, reporting the following on the incident:

“The death toll in a knife attack orchestrated by alleged ‘separatists’ at a coal mine in northwestern China’s troubled Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region has climbed to at least 50 people—including five police officers—with as many as 50 injured, according to local security officials who say nine suspects are on the run. The attack occurred on Sept. 18, when a group of knife-wielding suspects set upon security guards at the gate of the Sogan Colliery in Aksu (in Chinese, Akesu) prefecture’s Bay (Baicheng) county, before targeting the mine owner’s residence and a dormitory for workers. When police officers arrived at the mine in Terek township to control the situation, the attackers rammed their vehicles using trucks loaded down with coal, sources said. Three sources, including a ruling Communist Party cadre from a local township government, told RFA’s Uyghur Service in recent days that at least 50 people were killed and as many as 50 injured in the attack—with most casualties suffered by the mine’s largely majority Han Chinese workers.” (RFA, 30 September 2015)

While official statements on the attack couldn’t be retrieved, later reports writing about the Chinese government’s response in the aftermath of the incident claim that the death toll in the coal mine attack had been 16 people (HRW, 23 November 2015; BBC News, 20 November 2015; Reuters, 20 November 2015). In November 2015, RFA writes with reference to the Xinjiang regional government’s Tianshan web portal that “[t]he Tianshan report, the first official confirmation of both the attack on the mine and the police response, put the number of dead in the coalmine attack at 16, including three police officers and two police assistants, with 18 injured”. However, RFA states that it was told by local sources that “as many as 50

people were killed in Sept. 18 attack, which was not reported in Chinese media” (RFA, 20 November 2015)

The Chinese government reportedly responded to the coal mine attack with a two month long operation which was also mentioned by Radio Free Asia’s Uyghur Service. On 17 November 2015 RFA reports that authorities “have killed 17 suspects from three families, including women and children, they accused of carrying out an attack that left 50 people dead and injured 50 others at a coal mine, according to the government and local sources” (RFA, 17 November 2015). On 24 November 2015, RFA refers to a higher number of killed suspects reported by Chinese official sources:

“Repeating a report that appeared briefly on China’s Ministry of Public Security announced on Nov. 14 before it was removed, [the Xinjiang regional government’s] Tianshan [web portal] said the 28 were killed and one person surrendered, during a 56-day manhunt.” (RFA, 24 November 2015)

BBC News also reported on the two months long police operation writing that “Chinese security forces have killed 28 people allegedly responsible for a deadly attack on a coal mine in Xinjiang, state media have said. The deaths took place over a 56-day operation in which one person was detained.” (BBC News, 20 November 2015)

Human Rights Watch released a statement calling for an investigation into the police raid, allowing independent observers to monitor the situation on the ground and arguing that “journalists who have tried to travel to the sites of recent violent incidents have been stopped at checkpoints, and in some cases been prevented from filming or staying at hotels” (HRW, 23 November 2015). In December 2015, RFA reports about the detention of suspects who allegedly had been aware of the planned attacks on the coal mine in Aksu:

“Between 700 and 800 people detained for questioning by authorities in the aftermath of the incident were released within two weeks of the raid on a cave where the suspects were hiding, while around 100 others remain in custody because they are believed to have been aware of plans for the attack but did not report them to police, according to sources. ‘In particular, the ring leader Musa Toxtiniyaz’s two daughters-in-law are facing harsh punishment because they were told about the attack plan and urged to take part, but they chose not to,’ one source told RFA’s Uyghur Service, speaking on condition of anonymity.” (RFA, 8 December 2015)

Another major security incident in 2015 was reported in June during Ramadan at a police checkpoint in the city of Kashgar. Radio Free Asia reported the following on the incident:

“At least 18 people are dead following a knife and bomb attack by a group of ethnic Uyghurs on a police traffic checkpoint in northwestern China’s troubled Xinjiang region, sources said Tuesday, amid harsh restrictions on observance of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. One source said the incident, which occurred Monday in the Tahtakoruk district of southwestern Xinjiang’s Kashgar (in Chinese, Kashi) city, left as many as 28 people dead, several of whom were bystanders.” (RFA, 23 June 2015)



Human Rights Watch included the incident in Kashgar in its yearly report, writing that “a group of people attacked a police traffic checkpoint in Kashgar with small bombs and knives. Between 18 and 28 people reportedly died, including 15 suspects killed by police as well as several bystanders” (HRW, 27 January 2016).

The year 2015 also saw a number of articles by Radio Free Asia’s Uyghur Service reporting about incidents of police violence during which Uyghurs had been shot (RFA, 19 June 2015; 13 March 2015; 19 February 2015). In one of these incidents, on 9 March 2015, the police reportedly shot and killed seven Uyghurs who they viewed to be acting suspiciously at a restaurant in Hotan (in Chinese, Hetian) prefecture’s Qaraqash (Moyu) county. RFA quotes Tursun Qurban, the security chairman of Jumebaza village, near where the incident took place, explaining that four police officers from a county-level state security unit were investigating the men when the shooting occurred:

“[Tursun Qurban] said police asked for the identification of the seven Uyghurs who were gathered at the Sherbet restaurant at a hotel in Purchaqchi township—where several incidents have resulted in bloodshed in recent months—and then attempted to search them, but were met with resistance, sparking the clash.” (RFA, 13 March 2015)

In April 2015 RFA reports that authorities have confirmed that a 24 year old ethnic Uyghur who was shot by police after being arrested in July 2014 never committed any crime against the government:

“Nine months after a police officer shot to death an unarmed Uyghur man in northwest China’s restive Xinjiang region, local authorities have said that the suspect never committed a crime against the government, although he was accused of being a ‘troublemaker’. Memet Abdurehim, 26, was arrested on July 27 at his home in Aksu (in Chinese, Akesu) prefecture’s Shayar (Shaya) county by local policemen who detained him on suspicion that he was planning an attack against the government based on negative comments he posted on social media about the socioeconomic situation in his Shaya township. But Eziz Toxti, chief of the county’s legal-political committee, told RFA’s Uyghur Service recently that Abdurehim had not been involved in any violent incidents or planned attacks on the local government. ‘Our agents just found signs that he had thoughts about doing something against the government,’ he said.” (RFA, 24 April 2015)

RFA reports of several incidents in which official government representatives and Han Chinese have been attacked by ethnic Uyghurs. The head of Layqa township, in Hotan (in Chinese, Hetian), was stabbed in May 2015 (RFA, 27 May 2015). On 8 March 2015 a local armed forces commander and two members of his family as well as a security guard were reportedly hacked to death in front of a restaurant in the city of Kashgar. When the police arrived, seven ethnic Uyghurs were shot at the scene (RFA, 18 March 2015). RFA reports that on 9 March 2015 Uyghur security chief Imin Memtimin, who had played an active role in police operations in Sadiqawat village of Baghchi township in Hotan county, was kidnapped from his home. At the time of publication of the RFA article, the kidnappers had not been caught, but the suspects were believed to be Uyghur because they reportedly used sticks instead of guns. According to a local police of Sadiqawat village, more than 1,000 people have

been interrogated and more than 200 suspects were detained during the investigations (RFA, 23 March 2015).

Clashes between Chinese authorities and ethnic Uyghurs also caused casualties in 2015. RFA reported on such an incident on 17 February in which 17 members of the Uyghur minority were killed during house-to-house searches in the town of Yaqaeriq (Yingairike) in Bay (Baicheng) county:

“A clash in China’s northwestern Xinjiang region killed 17 members of the country’s Uyghur minority, including four policemen who were slashed with knives, nine attackers who were shot to death and four people killed by police gunfire, officials and witnesses said. The Feb. 17 incident in Aksu (In Chinese, Akesu) prefecture came during house-to-house searches by police, who were attacked by a group of more than 10 people gathered in a house 150 meters from the police station in the town of Yaqaeriq. (Yingairike) in Bay (Baicheng) county.” (RFA, 20 February 2015)

RFA reports about the death of five people after a clash at a checkpoint which was followed by a 48-hour manhunt in January 2015:

“Three Uyghur teenagers failed to stop at a security checkpoint on Wednesday in Keriye county (Yutian in Chinese) in Hotan prefecture (Hetian in Chinese) and then resisted police efforts to detain them. The three security officials ‘chased them with a pickup truck and stopped them at a river valley and tried to take them to the police,’ said Memet Turdi, village head of Yantaqkol village of Chira country (Cele in Chinese).

The three teenagers ‘refused to go to the police, saying that they were there to find valuable stones,’ Turdi told RFA’s Uyghur service. ‘When a policeman dragged one of them to the truck a dispute erupted between them,’ he said. ‘Then the suspects killed all the personnel with knives.’ The three slain security officials, two auxiliary police and one security guard were unarmed, Turdi added. Adil Alim, police chief of Lengger town of Keriye county told RFA that after the stabbing, Omer Abdugheni, 18, and Omer Memet, 17, fled to the village of Yenigkol in Lengger, while the third teenager ran to another village, called Layqa.” (RFA, 30 January 2015)

Two events related to suicide bombings in Xinjiang were reported in 2015. RFA reports about two successive suicide attacks on 11 May and 12 May 2015 in Hotan (in Chinese, Hetian) prefecture’s Lop (Luopu) county which killed three attackers and three police officers and wounded four policemen. (RFA, 13 May 2015). On 12 January RFA reports that authorities in Kashgar shot seven people claiming that they were carrying explosive devices for a planned suicide bombing (RFA, 12 January 2015).

Casualties were also reported during police raids of houses. On 19 April 2015 six Uyghurs accused of being terrorists were killed in Suk village, Lengger township, Keriye county (in Chinese, Yutian) of Hotan (Hetian) prefecture during such an operation (RFA, 1 May 2015). In April 2015, RFA reports about a number of police raids of houses and related detentions of residents living in Shayar (in Chinese, Shaya) county of Aksu (Akesu) prefecture:

“Authorities in a county in northwest China’s restive Xinjiang region have conducted raids of residents’ homes as they continued to search for suspects involved in a Chinese flag-burning incident at a mosque that occurred more than a year ago, local villagers and officials said. Police have detained hundreds of villagers and searched and confiscated abandoned houses where those involved in the incident could be hiding, they said. Authorities began raiding the homes of the predominantly Turkic-speaking Muslim Uyghurs who live in Shayar (in Chinese, Shaya) county of Aksu (Akesu) prefecture this past January after three Uyghur youths burned a Chinese flag that was hoisted above an Islamic mosque in January 2014. Authorities had forced ethnic Uyghurs to bow to the flag when they came to worship, area residents said.” (RFA, 16 April 2015)

In another article in April 2015, RFA reports about a three-month operation targeting suspected terrorists which resulted in the killing of three people. Additionally, two people were sentenced to jail for housing terrorist suspects:

“Authorities in northwest China’s restive Xinjiang region have killed three people and jailed two others from an ethnic Uyghur family during a three-month operation targeting suspected terrorists, according to state media and a relative of one of those killed. A verdict issued by the Purchaqchi township court in Hotan (in Chinese, Hetian) prefecture’s Hotan county in late March announced that Tursun Hoshur, 52, and his daughter Maynur Tursun, 24, were sentenced to 12 and eight years in prison, respectively, for harboring ‘terrorists,’ state media reported. The two had been recovering from wounds sustained after being fired on by authorities during a June 22, 2014 raid on their home in Dongjay village, which also saw Hoshur’s wife, 45-year-old Melikixan Obul, shot dead when she refused to open her door to police, the report said. Additionally, two sons of the family—Turdimemet Tursun, 21, and Nurmet Tursun, 17—were among nine Uyghur ‘terror suspects’ shot dead by police in a second incident related to the three-month operation in Purchaqchi on Aug. 1 last year, official media said.” (RFA, 7 April 2015)

On 25 March 2015 a fire in Karamay city reportedly destroyed houses of Uyghur families which had been up for eviction, causing seven casualties. Referring to local sources, RFA reports the following about the incident:

“Around 55 homes in a Uyghur neighborhood marked for construction of a housing project were destroyed by fire on Wednesday, leaving seven dead and eight in hospital with severe burns, sources said. The fire, helped by gale-force winds, spread quickly on March 25 through the Kassaphana section of Karamay city in northwestern China’s Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, and burned only the houses of Uyghur families who had been ordered evicted, one source told RFA’s Uyghur Service. ‘It is strange that only those houses marked for eviction were burned,’ the man said, speaking on condition of anonymity. [...] Even though he and others in the neighborhood had been told to leave their homes to make way for development in the area, ‘no compensation was offered for the loss of our property,’ he said. ‘We were also never told where we might go to live,’ he said. ‘Right now, we do not know what is awaiting us.’ ‘We cannot go back to our houses,

because the neighborhood has been blocked off by police,' he said.” (RFA, 26 March 2015)

The Washington-based Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP), which was founded by the Uyghur American Association (UAA) with the stated aim to promote human rights and democracy for the Uyghur people and to raise awareness of human rights abuses, collected data from Chinese and international media for the period 2013 to 2014. For the two-year period, the UHRP recorded 125 incidents which it interpreted as ‘political’ from media sources, 89 of these incidents had been violent (UHRP, 16 March 2015, p. 2). It claims that “the number of fatalities in 2014 is approximately double that of 2013” and that “Uyghurs were three times more likely than Han Chinese to be killed in the violence”. Regarding the geographical spread of violence, the UHRP notes the following:

“Kashgar Prefecture experienced the largest number of fatalities. Of the 327 deaths in Kashgar Prefecture, 199 occurred in Yarkand County. Aksu (79 fatalities) and Hotan (76 fatalities) recorded the second and third highest number of deaths among prefecture level administrative areas. Unsurprisingly, the prefectures with the highest documented incidents were Kashgar, Hotan and Aksu. Consequently, the south of the region, a Uyghur majority area, was most heavily impacted. The north, where Uyghurs comprise a smaller proportion of the population, was largely unaffected by violent incidents and fatalities, except Urumchi.” (UHRP, 16 March 2015, p.2)

The UHRP claims that the total figure of deaths in 2014 approximately doubles those in 2013, which indicates deterioration in the security environment across the region. UHRP recorded 57 violent incidents in 2014 out of a total of 84 incidents as opposed to 2013, where 32 violent incidents out of a total of 41 incidents were recorded (UHRP, 16 March 2015, p.7).

According to the *The Diplomat*, 113 people were killed and 368 injured in terrorist attacks in China in 2014. Listing the major security incidents in Xinjiang in 2014, *The Diplomat* claims that “2014 was the year of deadly terrorist attacks for China. Beijing is determined not to let history repeat itself in 2015” (*The Diplomat*, 10 January 2015).

Minority Rights Group International (MRG) provides the following summary of the main security incident in 2014:

“The year 2014 saw a number of tragic attacks related to ongoing tensions within Xinjiang. This included the massacre of more than 30 people in March outside a train station in Kunming, Yunnan province by a group subsequently reported to be Xinjiang separatists. In May, two cars loaded with explosives also ploughed through a busy shopping street in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang province, killing around 30 people. Both incidents were condemned by the President of the World Uyghur Congress (WUC), Rebiya Kadeer, though she called on China to refrain from collectively punishing the whole population and drew attention to the role that state policies played in encouraging the violence. [...] Violence in the region peaked over the summer following a riot in Yarkand that resulted in 96 deaths, according to official sources, including 37 civilians and

59 persons identified by the government as religious extremists.” (MRG, 2 July 2015, p. 186)

Sources note that in October 2014, 22 people lost their lives in an incident in Bachu (Kashgar prefecture) when four Uyghurs armed with knives and explosives went to a predominantly Han Chinese market and killed several police officers before they were shot dead by police forces (BAMF, 20 October 2014; RFA, 18 October 2014). The incident came only two days after two Uyghurs had killed three police officers and three civil servants in the Pishan area in the Hotan prefecture (RFA, 18 October 2014).

On 21 September 2014, attacks targeting government buildings and police stations were reported in Bugur (in Chinese, Luntai) county in the Bayingolin Mongol Autonomous Prefecture of Xinjiang. According to RFA and the BBC, China’s official news agency Xinhua initially reported that two people were killed but later revised the death toll to 50 people (RFA, 25 September 2014; BBC News, 26 September 2014b). On 25 September, the official Xinhua news agency reported the following:

“Forty rioters died in a series of explosions in Luntai County of northwest China’s Xinjiang on Sunday, and six civilians, two police officers and two auxiliary policemen were killed, local media reported Thursday. Another two rioters were captured by the police, according to the official Tianshan website. The explosions occurred at a shop, an open market and two police stations at around 5 p.m. Sunday, the website said, adding 54 civilians including 32 ethnic Uyghurs, were injured. Xinjiang police said it was an ‘organized and serious’ terrorist attack. Previously, local media reported that the blasts killed two people.” (Xinhua, 25 September 2014)

Human Rights Watch (HRW) called for independent investigations into the violence in Xinjiang. In response to the attacks on 21 September, HRW writes that “[i]n September 2014 in Luntai County, six people were reportedly killed and 54 injured in a series of blasts. State media claimed the authorities killed 40 alleged attackers and captured two” (HRW, 23 November 2015). RFA’s Uyghur Service described the situation after the blasts quoting a nurse at a local hospital:

“‘I assume there are about 100 people with injuries because all the hospital beds are occupied right now,’ the nurse said. Among those undergoing treatment were up to 20 policemen, as well as one suspected attacker, she said. [...] A curfew has been imposed in the affected areas, with schools and offices closed as of late Tuesday, according to Aklikim, the secretary of the ruling Chinese Communist Party branch in Bartoghraq village in Terekbazar.” (RFA, 25 September 2014)

According to the Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP), the period of April to July 2014 has reportedly seen an increase of security related incidents:

“A spike in incidents was noted between April to July 2014, a period that included Ramadan and intensified security measures as Chinese authorities announced a one-year ‘anti-terror’ campaign. From the data, at least one Uyghur was shot dead by Chinese

security forces in two thirds of the violent incidents during this period of intensification.”  
(UHRP, 16 March 2015, p.3)

On 30 April 2014, RFA reports about three people being killed and 79 injured in a knife and bomb attack on a railway station in Urumqi on as President Xi Jinping ended a visit to the region (RFA, 30 April 2014). Following the incident, large numbers of detainees, most of them reportedly being women and children, were taken into police custody:

“The relatives of Sedirdin Sawut, who authorities said was one of two Uyghur ‘religious extremists’ behind a suicide attack at the Urumqi South railway station on April 30, were detained in Xinjiang’s Aksu prefecture. [...] Authorities in Sawut’s hometown of Gulbagh in Shayar have been rounding up his relatives to search for ‘like-minded’ people who may be planning future terrorist strikes, local police said. Dozens of children were among those who were detained in Gulbagh, where Sawut lived until two years ago and where former neighbors remember him as a pious farmer, police and residents said. ‘We detained more than 100 of Sedirdin Sawut’s family members, including his relatives and his wife’s, and handed them over to the Shayar county police,’ Gulbagh police chief Musa Emet told RFA’s Uyghur Service. ‘Most of them were women and children,’ he said.”  
(RFA, 9 May 2014)

On 29 July 2014, China’s official news agency Xinhua reported about riots in Shache County, also known as Yarkand in the Uighur language, in Xinjiang’s Kashgar prefecture which happened the previous day, stating that “a gang armed with knives and axes attacked a police station and government offices in Elixku Township, and some moved on to the nearby Huangdi Township, attacking civilians and smashing vehicles as they passed. Dozens of Uygur and Han civilians were killed or injured, according to the local police.” (Xinhua, 29 July 2014). Five days later, Xinhua released a death toll of the violence:

“A total of 37 civilians were killed and another 13 injured in a terrorist attack Monday in Shache County, Kashgar Prefecture, northwest China’s Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, authorities said Sunday.

Police gunned down 59 terrorists and arrested 215 others, the regional government said after a meeting Saturday presided by Zhang Chunxian, secretary of the regional committee of the Communist Party of China. The case was first reported Tuesday, but no figures were given except that dozens of people died. Among the dead were 35 Hans and two Uygurs, the government said.” (Xinhua, 3 August 2014)

RFA’s Uyghur Service referred to local officials, stating that the riots started in the morning when groups of Uyghurs attacked a police station and government offices in Elishku township and the police responded by firing at the crowd. The riots carried on in three villages in Elishku, targeting local government offices, Uyghur officials and Han Chinese. According to RFA the riots were sparked over restrictions during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan and the killing of a family of five (RFA, 29 July 2014).

Deutsche Welle (DW), Germany’s international broadcaster, interviewed Alim Seytoff, spokesman for the Germany-based World Uyghur Congress (WUC), who described the events as following:

“According to local Uighurs, heavily-armed Chinese security forces opened fire and killed and wounded nearly 100 Uighurs after hundreds of them protested en masse against China’s heavy-handed Ramadan crackdown for the past month and the extrajudicial killing of a Uighur family in Yarkant County in early July. Since Xi Jinping became president, Chinese security forces have been given the order to shoot and kill Uighur protestors with impunity. As a result, the Uighurs have been witnessing more and more killings and even massacres.” (DW, 30 July 2014)

RFA quotes Rebiya Kadeer, president of the WUC, claiming that 2,000 ethnic Uyghurs could have been killed:

“‘We have evidence in hand that at least 2,000 Uyghurs in the neighborhood of Elishku township have been killed by Chinese security forces on the first day and they ‘cleaned up’ the dead bodies on the second and third day during a curfew that was imposed,’ she said. ‘We have recorded voice messages from the people in the neighborhood and written testimonies on exactly what had taken place in Elishku township of Yarkand county during this massacre,’ she said, adding that the victims were mainly from villages No. 14, 15 and 16 in the township. ‘We can share these facts without releasing the source of the information as their security and safety is at risk,’ said Kadeer, who has been in exile in Washington since being released from a Chinese prison in 2005.” (RFA, 5 August 2014)

Minority Rights Group International (MRG) writes that “[t]he details surrounding these events are also contested, with state outlets claiming that the violence began with a premeditated attack on a police station by jihadist militants”, while Uyghur sources, among them the WUC “have suggested that a recent security crackdown on religious practices and reports of police abuses had triggered the protests.” (MRG, 2 July 2015, p. 186)

On 22 May 2014, a violent incident was recorded in Xinjiang’s regional capital Urumqi, where two cars crashed into a market while setting off explosives which killed 31 people and injuring more than 90 people (Guardian, 22 May 2014; BBC News, 23 May 2014; Washington Post, 22 May 2014). According to RFA, the government blamed five suicide bombers for the incident and announced a one-year anti-terrorism campaign in response to the attack (RFA, 23 May 2014a). RFA reports on the subsequent anti-terrorism crackdown in July:

“Chinese authorities in the troubled Xinjiang region have detained hundreds of suspects since launching a year-long anti-terrorism crackdown in May, official media reported, amid criticism that Beijing is pursuing ‘gangster justice’ against ethnic minority Muslim Uyghurs during the current holy month of Ramadan. [...] Since then, police have busted more than 40 ‘terrorism groups,’ arresting more than 400 suspects, official media reported. According to Beijing’s Legal Daily News, around a quarter of the arrests came after tip-offs from informants or the general public.” (RFA, 8 July 2014)

Minority Rights Group International also reported about the government’s responses to the incident in Urumqi writing that “following the Urumqi bombing, China announced a year-long anti-terrorism crackdown, with Xinjiang Party Secretary Zhang Chunxian asserting the necessity for ‘unconventional measures’ in the ‘people’s war’ against terrorism”. These

measures “included numerous raids on mosques, house-to-house searches, harassment and other abuses by police, with several rights groups reporting increased arbitrary arrests and disappearances. Executions were also carried out throughout the year.” (MRG, 2 July 2015, p. 186)

Radio Free Asia’s Uyghur Service reports about several violent incidents in the aftermath of the explosions at Urumqi market, the following article from August 2014 provides an example:

“Security forces in northwestern China’s restive Xinjiang region have shot dead three ethnic minority Uyghur Muslim farmers after they allegedly resisted arrest in connection with suspected separatist activities, according to officials. But a local Uyghur leader said the three did not commit any ‘tangible’ crimes and were rounded up for possession of knives and axes as well as religious material. The latest violence in the region came as Beijing stepped up an anti-terror campaign in the wake of bombings and other activities blamed on Uyghur separatists.” (RFA, 22 August 2014)

An RFA article from June 2015 discloses information about incidents that reportedly happened during the anti-terrorism crackdown in 2014:

“An incident involving the killing of three female relatives of a Uyghur suspect who was arrested during China’s most recent ‘strike hard’ campaign has come to light in the wake of recent reports by state media that authorities had foiled scores of ‘terrorist’ plots in the country’s restive northwest. Police in Aksu (in Chinese, Akesu) prefecture in Xinjiang killed the wife, mother and sister of 24-year-old Nurmemet Omer during a raid last July 27, officer Zulpiqar Imin, who was involved in the operation, recently told RFA’s Uyghur Service. Officers detained Omer in mid-July on suspicion of being part of a plotted attack in the prefecture’s Toqsu (Xinhe) county, although he denied the charges”. (RFA, 2 June 2015)

Smaller incidents of police violence and clashes in Xinjiang are reported by RFA’s Uyghur Service throughout 2014. For instance, in January, Chinese authorities have shot dead three Uyghurs who attacked a police station in Yengieriq town in Aksu prefecture’s Awat county (RFA, 22 January 2014). In March 2014 RFA writes that “[p]olice in Xinjiang severely assaulted a minority Uyghur youth until he became unconscious following a quarrel between him and a Han Chinese policeman” (RFA, 27 March 2014). In July 2014, RFA reports that according to police, “[s]ix ethnic majority Han Chinese farmers have been stabbed to death in the latest outbreak of violence”. According to officials, “[p]olice shot dead an ethnic minority Uyghur man and captured three other Uyghur suspects following the incident last Wednesday in Uchturpan (in Chinese, Wushi).” (RFA, 14 July 2014)

Throughout the year 2014, a number of sources reported about the case of Uyghur scholar Illham Tohti. Tohti was formally arrested on 20 February 2014 on separatism charges after he had been in custody for more than a month without his family being informed about his whereabouts (RFA, 25 February 2014). RFA also reports that the authorities have arrested three of Ilham Tohti’s students “on charges of ‘splittism’ and ‘revealing state secrets,’” while



the fate of two other of his students remains unknown (RFA, 26 February 2014). In November 2014, seven of Tohti's former students were reportedly put on trial for separatism charges (RFA, 25 November 2014). On 23 September 2014, Ilham Tohti was sentenced to life imprisonment after a secret trial on the charge of 'separatism'. According to Amnesty International (AI), "it is believed his sentencing is a result of his views about the situation of Uighurs in China, expressed both online and in his teachings" (AI, 15 January 2016, p. 1). Human Rights Watch (HRW) included the case in its *World Report 2016*, stating that Ilham Tohti remained imprisoned without adequate medical care (HRW, 27 January 2016).

Outside Xinjiang, a knife attack at a train station in the city of Kunming in Yunnan Province was reported in March 2014. 29 people died and at least 130 were wounded in the attack which Chinese officials claimed to be carried out by separatists from north-western Xinjiang (BBC News, 2 March 2014). The New York Times (NYT) described the incident in the following way:

"A group of assailants wielding knives stormed into a railway station in southwestern China on Saturday, slashing employees and commuters and leaving at least 29 people dead and 130 wounded, according to Xinhua, the official Chinese news agency. The local government indicated that the attackers were Uighur separatists seeking an independent homeland in the Xinjiang region in China's far west. The attack, in Yunnan Province, was far from Xinjiang, and if carried out by members of the largely Muslim Uighur minority could imply that the volatile tensions between them and the government might be spilling beyond that restive region" (NYT, 1 March 2014)

The attack in Kunming has been called China's 9/11 (NYT, 24 March 2015; The Diplomat, 4 March 2014). Radio Free Asia cites local residents as well as an exile group stating that in the aftermath of the attack, Chinese authorities have been deporting large numbers of ethnic minority Uyghurs from Yunnan to Xinjiang (RFA, 12 March 2014). In March 2015, the New York Times reported that the authorities had executed three men with Uyghur names because of the knife attack, a pregnant woman was given a life sentence in prison. (NYT, 24 March 2015)

A security incident outside Xinjiang was also reported in 2013 when a car crashed into Tiananmen Square in Beijing on 28 October:

"Police in China have named two suspects linked to a 'major incident' in Beijing, after a deadly car crash in Tiananmen Square, state media report. The vehicle crashed into a crowd and burst into flames, killing five people. Police subsequently issued a notice to hotels in Beijing seeking information about two people from Xinjiang province, Chinese media said. The note also described a vehicle and four number plates from Xinjiang, the scene of sporadic violent incidents. State-run Xinhua news agency said that of the five people who died on Monday, three people died inside the car." (BBC News, 29 October 2013)

When reporting on consequences in Xinjiang after the Tiananmen crash, Radio Free Asia's Uyghur service quotes a spokesperson from the World Uyghur Congress stating that

“Authorities in Xinjiang’s northern Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture’s Ghujla (in Chinese, Yining) city have detained 53 Muslim Uyghurs” since the incident. (RFA, 4 November 2013)

For the whole year of 2013, Rongxing Guo, a professor and Head of the Regional Economics Committee of the Regional Science Association of China (RSAC) at Peking University, provides the following overview of security incidents in Xinjiang:

“On April 23, gunfights in Bachu leave 15 police and community workers and six attackers dead. Two men are later sentenced to death. On June 26, at least 35 people are killed when ‘knife-wielding mobs’ attack police stations and other sites in Lukqun town, Shanshan county before security personnel open fire. Three people are later sentenced to death. On August 20, a Chinese policeman is killed in Yecheng county, Kashgar. On October 28, three members of the same Xinjiang family crash their car into tourists in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, killing two people (including a woman from the Philippines) and injuring 40 (including one from Japan) before setting the car on fire and dying. On November 17, two policemen and nine attackers are killed at a police station in Serikbuya. On December 16, 14 Uyghurs and two policer officers are killed in Shufu county. On December 30, an assault on a police station in Yarkand leaves eight attackers dead.” (Guo, 2015, p. 13)

## 4 Human Rights Situation in China (including the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region)

As BBC News notes, information from Xinjiang is “tightly controlled, particularly concerning incidents that occur there” (BBC News, 1 November 2013). For further information on this issue, please [refer to section 4.1](#) (Freedom of expression) of this compilation.

### 4.1 Freedom of expression, including, Internet and media

Article 35 of the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China, adopted in December 1982 and amended as of March 2004, states that “[C]itizens of the People’s Republic of China enjoy freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association, of procession and of demonstration” (Constitution of the People’s Republic of China, 14 March 2004, Article 35).

Freedom House states in its *Freedom of the Press 2015* report, which covers the year 2014:

“Article 35 of the constitution guarantees freedoms of speech, assembly, association, and publication, but such rights are subordinated to the discretion of the CCP and its status as the ruling power. Moreover, the constitution cannot, in most cases, be invoked in court as a legal basis for asserting individual rights. Judges are appointed by the CCP and generally follow its directives, particularly in politically sensitive cases. There is no press law that governs the protection of journalists or the punishment of their attackers. Instead, vaguely worded provisions in the penal code and state secrets legislation are routinely used to imprison Chinese citizens for the peaceful expression of views that the CCP considers objectionable. Criminal defamation provisions are also occasionally used to similar effect.” (Freedom House, 28 April 2015)

Article 105 of the Criminal Law of the People’s Republic of China includes the following provision:

“Whoever incites others by spreading rumors or slanders or any other means to subvert the State power or overthrow the socialist system shall be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of not more than five years, criminal detention, public surveillance or deprivation of political rights; and the ringleaders and the others who commit major crimes shall be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of not less than five years.” (Criminal Law of the People’s Republic of China, 14 March 1997, Article 105)

Article 293 of the same Criminal Law provides the following:

“Whoever commits any of the following acts of creating disturbances, thus disrupting public order, shall be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of not more than five years, criminal detention or public surveillance:

- (1) beating another person at will and to a flagrant extent;
- (2) chasing, intercepting or hurling insults to another person to a flagrant extent;
- (3) forcibly taking or demanding, willfully damaging, destroying or occupying public or private money or property to a serious extent; or

(4) creating disturbances in a public place, thus causing serious disorder in such place.”  
(Criminal Law of the People’s Republic of China, 14 March 1997, Article 293)

Freedom House’s *Freedom on the Net 2015* report comments on laws and regulations relating to freedom of expression and on relevant judicial practice:

“Article 35 of the Chinese constitution guarantees freedoms of speech, assembly, association, and publication, but such rights are subordinated to the CCP’s status as the ruling power. In addition, the constitution cannot, in most cases, be invoked in courts as a legal basis for asserting rights. The judiciary is not independent and closely follows party directives, particularly in politically sensitive freedom of expression cases. China lacks specific press or internet laws, but government agencies issue regulations to establish censorship guidelines. Regulations—which can be highly secretive—are subject to constant change and cannot be challenged by the courts. Prosecutors exploit vague provisions in China’s criminal code; laws governing printing and publications; subversion, separatism, and antiterrorism laws; and state secrets legislation to imprison citizens for online activity.” (Freedom House, 2 November 2015)

The October 2015 annual report of the US Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) states that the Chinese government and the CPC continue to use “vague provisions in the PRC Criminal Law to prosecute citizens for exercising their right to freedom of speech”. The CECC notes that during the reporting year (autumn 2014 to autumn 2015), examples of such provisions included Articles 293 (“picking quarrels and provoking trouble”), 225 (“illegal business activity”) and Article 105(2) (“inciting subversion of state power”) of the Criminal Law. The same report goes on to note with reference to a 2013 judicial interpretation of Article 293:

“Chinese legal experts continued to criticize a 2013 judicial interpretation that expanded ‘picking quarrels and provoking trouble’ to penalize online speech, noting the interpretation goes beyond the provision’s scope of tangible acts of disorderly conduct.”  
(CECC, 8 October 2015, p. 66)

The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) states that while freedom of speech and press are guaranteed under the constitution, “the opacity of Chinese media regulations allows authorities to crack down on news stories by claiming that they expose state secrets and endanger the country” (CFR, 7 April 2015).

A December 2015 Xinhua report notes the following implications of the December 2015 counter-terrorism law that pertain to the dissemination of information through the media and the Internet:

“Under the new bill, telecom operators and internet service providers are required to provide technical support and assistance, including decryption, to police and national security authorities in prevention and investigation of terrorist activities.

They should also prevent dissemination of information on terrorism and extremism. [...]

Before Sunday's new bill, China did not have an anti-terrorism legislation, though related provisions feature in various NPC Standing Committee decisions, as well as the Criminal Law, Criminal Procedure Law and Emergency Response Law. [...]

In the rare reality of a terrorist attack, no institutions or individuals shall fabricate and disseminate information on forged terrorist incidents, report on or disseminate details of terrorist activities that might lead to imitation, nor publish scenes of cruelty and inhumanity in terrorist activities, the new law reads.

None, except news media with approval from counter-terrorism authorities in charge of information distribution, shall report on or disseminate the personal details of on-scene counter-terrorist workers, hostages or authorities' response activities.

The clause was specifically revised to restrict the distribution of terrorism-related information by individual users on social media, earlier reports said." (Xinhua, 27 December 2015)

In January 2016, Bloomberg News, a New York City-based news agency, reports about a law on cybersecurity that took effect in January 2016:

"On Jan. 1 [2016] a law took effect that requires telecommunications and Internet companies operating in China to provide law enforcement with technical assistance, including decryption of sensitive user data, in any probe meant 'to avert and investigate terrorist activities.'" (Bloomberg News, 21 January 2016)

In July 2015, a Reuters news agency report mentions that a national security law has been passed by the standing committee of the National People's Congress (NPC) (Reuters, 1 July 2015).

A July 2015 article of the Economist newspaper notes that the new national security law emphasizes the duty of citizens to protect national security. Rather than containing prohibitions and punishments, the new law contains numerous obligations such as to "defend the fundamental interests of the people", to take "all measures necessary" to protect the country, and the duty to report anything that may pose a threat. (Economist, 4 July 2015)

As the US Department of State (USDOS) states in its April 2016 *Country Report on Human Rights Practices*, which covers the year 2015, "[t]here was severe official repression of the freedoms of speech, religion, association, and assembly" of Uyghurs in the XUAR (USDOS, 13 April 2016, section 2a).

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) mentions that in 2014, of the 44 journalists "in jail for their work in China, 17 were Uighurs" (CPJ, December 2014).

As regards media coverage on Xinjiang, a July 2015 New York Times (NYT) article notes that "[t]he official Chinese news media often avoids reporting on the continuing violence inside Xinjiang, including clashes between the police and Uighurs that produce body counts in the double digits." The same article cites Nicholas Bequelin, Amnesty International's regional

director for East Asia, as saying that there are “only a few channels of information” from Xinjiang and “even fewer information channels that are subjected to some sort of journalistic standards” (NYT, 31 July 2015).

In a March 2014 news release, Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF), a Paris-based NGO that promotes freedom of the press, notes that the authorities have imposed censorship on media coverage following the Kunming train station knife attacks, ordering that media that report about the incident should “strictly adhere to Xinhua News Agency wire copy or information provided by local authorities” (RSF, 12 March 2014).

As a November 2015 BBC report notes, “China strictly controls media access to Xinjiang so reports are difficult to verify (BBC News, 20 November 2015).

A number of sources refer to restrictions imposed on foreign journalists wishing to work in the XUAR (Freedom House, 28 April 2015; FT, 17 November 2015; HRW, 23 November 2015; NYT, 2 January 2016; USDOS, 13 April 2016, section 2a).

As Freedom House’s *Freedom of the Press 2015* mentions with reference to the year 2014, restrictions on access for foreign journalists to Xinjiang made it “very difficult to report independently on violent clashes between Uighurs and security forces in Xinjiang” (Freedom House, 28 April 2015).

The April 2016 USDOS *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2015* notes that “[w]hile authorities allowed foreign journalists access to Urumqi, XUAR, local and provincial authorities continued to control strictly the journalists’ travel, access, and interviews, even forcing them to leave cities in other parts of the XUAR.” (USDOS, 13 April 2016, section 2a)

A November 2015 article of the UK-based Financial Times (FT) newspaper quotes Maya Wang, China researcher in Human Rights Watch (HRW)’s Asia division as saying that “[i]n Xinjiang there is almost a complete lack of access for international journalists and human rights organisations” (FT, 17 November 2015).

A January 2016 New York Times (NYT) article points to challenges facing foreign journalists seeking to examine claims made in state media reports about events relating to Xinjiang:

“Officials in Xinjiang seldom respond to interview requests. Those ubiquitous checkpoints prevent journalists from reaching towns and cities recently hit by unrest, and in other places, the sudden appearance of government minders makes it hard to speak with residents. Last week, Beijing expelled a French reporter for an article that criticized its harsh policies in the region.” (NYT, 2 January 2016)

A November 2015 Human Rights Watch (HRW) press release notes:

“China’s central government and Xinjiang authorities [...] tightly control visits to the region by diplomats and journalists, making verification of the circumstances surrounding these incidents virtually impossible. Journalists who have tried to travel to the sites of

recent violent incidents have been stopped at checkpoints, and in some cases been prevented from filming or staying at hotels.” (HRW, 23 November 2015)

In July 2015, the NYT reported that “[p]eople inside Xinjiang risk their freedom” to pass information to Shohret Hoshur, a Washington, D.C.-based journalist working for Radio Free Asia (RFA)’s Uyghur language service:

“Some [of Hoshur’s informers in Xinjiang] circumvent China’s Internet controls and post messages to his account on Facebook, which is generally inaccessible in China. Others travel outside the region, sometimes as far away as Beijing or Shanghai, and call him in Washington from a public phone, he said.” (NYT, 31 July 2015)

The same article reports that in order to verify news items, Hoshur proceeds as follows:

“He searches online for the phone numbers of local businesses and starts calling, systematically varying the last few digits of the phone numbers he finds to reach other residents. It is not unusual for him to call as many as 100 people as he seeks to corroborate the news and nail down details.” (NYT, 31 July 2015)

The same NYT article reports that one of Hoshur’s younger brothers was “arrested in May 2014” and “charged with endangering state security in a mass trial and sentenced to five years in prison”. Hoshur’s other two brothers, who “expressed anger over the sentence in [an apparently monitored] phone call” with Hoshur, were detained in August 2014 and were awaiting trial at the time of reporting. Citing RFA, the article notes that “police have told Mr. Hoshur’s relatives that his brothers will be released only if he stops reporting on Xinjiang”. (NYT, 31 July 2015)

With regard to the treatment of members of religious and ethnic minorities engaging in online activities or disseminating or accessing banned information, Freedom House writes in its *Freedom of the Press 2015* report, which covers the year 2014:

“Members of religious and ethnic minorities are subject to particularly harsh treatment for their online activities, writings, or efforts to disseminate information that departs from the CCP line. Several of the journalists serving the longest prison terms in China are Uighurs and Tibetans. In addition to journalists, ordinary Tibetans, Uighurs, and Falun Gong practitioners have been imprisoned for accessing, possessing, or transmitting banned information.” (Freedom House, 28 April 2015)

A July 2014 Xinhua report notes that “courts in seven cities and prefectures of Xinjiang, including Urumqi, Aksu, Kizilsu Kirgiz, Ili, Hotan, Turpan and Bortala” sentenced a total of 32 people to prison terms for “spreading terror-related audio and video and organizing terrorist groups”. Three of the defendants were sentenced to life imprisonment while the 29 others received sentences of “four to 15 years in prison”. (Xinhua, 11 July 2014)

An April 2014 Foreign Policy (FP) article notes that there was a “crackdown on webmasters and online journalists following the violence of July 2009”, as “[the] authorities blamed exiled

Uighurs for using the Internet” to organise the Uyghur-led protests in Urumqi that turned violent:

“Dozens of Uighur website founders, editors, and writers received lengthy prison terms, including Gulmira Imin, a moderator and contributor to the now-defunct Uighur-language Salkin website, which featured news and cultural discussion as well as a discussion forum. Imin was sentenced to life in prison for ‘splittism, leaking state secrets, and organizing an illegal demonstration.’ Dilshat Perhat, webmaster and owner of Diyarim, which was similar in content to Salkin and also had a lively forum, was sentenced to five years in prison for ‘endangering state security.’ The Washington, D.C.-based Uyghur American Association says hundreds of other sites were also shut down.” (FP, 21 April 2014)

The April FP article goes on to say:

“A few months after the Urumqi violence, Xinjiang approved a law that made it a crime to post comments about independence or separatism online (the regional law reinforced already existing national legislation that bars seditious talk in cyberspace). The law also required Internet service providers and network operators to monitor and report any lawbreakers.” (FP, 21 April 2014)

As the Guardian newspaper reports with reference to the state-run Xinjiang Daily newspaper, “Zhao Xinwei, the editor of the state-run Xinjiang Daily newspaper, was removed from his job and expelled from the party after an investigation found him guilty of ‘improperly’ discussing, and publicly opposing, government policy in China’s violence-stricken west.” (Guardian, 2 November 2015).

Freedom House’s *Freedom on the Net 2015* report, which covers the year 2014, provides an overview of the case of the Uyghur academic Ilham Tohti:

“In January 2014, professor, writer, and Uyghur rights advocate Ilham Tohti was detained in a raid on his Beijing home. He was later indicted for allegedly spreading rumors, inciting ethnic hatred, and conducting separatist activities on a website he founded. Separatism charges carry a possible death penalty in extreme cases. In September 2014, a court sentenced Tohti to life imprisonment.” (Freedom House, 2 November 2015)

As the same source notes in its *Freedom of the Press 2015* report, Tohti is the founder of the Uyghur Online website (referred to here as “Uyghur Online”), which was “dedicated to improving interethnic understanding” (Freedom House, 28 April 2015).

The October 2015 annual report of the US Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) notes that “[i]n November 2014, the XUAR High People’s Court upheld Tohti’s life sentence, rejecting an appeal filed by his lawyers” (CECC, 8 October 2015, p. 284).

The same source notes that in December 2014, the Urumqi Intermediate People’s Court handed out prison sentences to seven persons who “had reportedly been students” of Tohti. As the report notes, “at least some” of them had contributed to the website Uyghur Online, which was founded by Tohti (CECC, 8 October 2015, p. 284).



The April 2016 USDOS *Country Report on Human Rights Practices*, which covers the year 2015, informs that the “Uighur webmasters Dilshat Perhat and Nijat Azat continued to serve sentences for ‘endangering state security’” (USDOS, 13 April 2016, section 2a).

## 4.2 Right to access information

A January 2016 New York Times (NYT) article quotes James Leibold of La Trobe University (Australia) as saying that “[t]he state’s ability to penetrate Uighur society has become increasingly sophisticated and intrusive” (NYT, 2 January 2016).

Rebecca MacKinnon, a US blogger and advocate for Internet freedom, wrote in a 2013 chapter contributed to the book *Will China Democratize?* (edited by Andrew J. Nathan, Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner):

“After ethnic riots took place in July 2009, the Internet was cut off in the entire province for six months, along with most mobile text messaging and international phone service. No one in Xinjiang could send e-mail or access any website – domestic or foreign. Internet access and phone service have since been restored, but with severe limitations on the number of text messages that people can send on their mobile phones per day, no access to overseas websites, and very limited access even to domestic Chinese websites. Xinjiang-based Internet users can only access watered-down versions of official Chinese news and information sites, with many of the functions such as blogging or comments disabled.” (MacKinnon, 2013, p. 264)

An April 2014 report of the state-run Xinhua news agency recalls that in the wake of the Urumqi riots of July 2014, “[i]nternet access in the region was cut off [...] to prevent violent crimes from happening again”. Besides the Internet, short message service (SMS) and international direct calling (IDD) were also suspended across the XUAR. Xinhua states that while browsing of some Chinese websites resumed from late December (with the ban on SMS lifted in February 2010), full access to the Internet was restored in May 2010. (Xinhua, 20 April 2014)

Freedom House states in its *Freedom of the Press 2015* report, which covers the year 2014:

“The government has developed the world’s most sophisticated and multilayered apparatus for censoring, monitoring, and manipulating online content. It is capable of a range of interventions, including localized internet blackouts during periods of unrest. On at least one occasion in 2014, local authorities completely shut down telecommunications in the Xinjiang city of Kashgar amid reported clashes between Uighur protesters and security forces.” (Freedom House, 28 April 2015)

A November 2015 article of the NYT cites five affected residents as saying that shortly after the November 2015 Paris attacks, “local police [in Xinjiang] began cutting the service of people who had downloaded foreign messaging services and other software”. As the article notes, all five interviewees said that “their telecommunications provider had told them to go to a local police station to have service restored”. One of the interviewees called the police and was told that “the service suspensions were aimed at people who had not linked their

identification to their account; used virtual private networks, or V.P.N.s, to evade China's system of Internet filters, known as the Great Firewall; or downloaded foreign messaging software, like WhatsApp or Telegram". The same article goes on to note:

"The Chinese government has long focused on software that circumvents the Great Firewall, like virtual private networks. But the move to suspend mobile phone accounts linked to the software demonstrates a new level of urgency. [...]"

China Unicom and China Mobile, which are mobile carriers, did not respond to requests for comment. An operator for China Telecom in Xinjiang referred questions to the local cyberpolice. An official with the Urumqi municipal police said the bans affected all three of China's state-run carriers but declined to comment further. Several complaints about the suspensions on Weibo, China's Twitter-like microblog, appeared to have been deleted by censors late last week. It's unclear how many of Xinjiang's roughly 20 million people have been affected." (NYT, 23 November 2015)

A November 2014 New York Times (NYT) article quotes Henryk Szadziewski, a senior researcher with the Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP) in Washington, D.C., as saying that for Uyghur users of the Internet, "[e]ven getting caught with a VPN on your computer is viewed as highly suspicious" (NYT, 23 November 2014).

An April 2014 Foreign Policy (FP) article notes on continuing shutdowns of the Internet following violent incidents:

"Authorities in Xinjiang continue to reach for the Internet kill switch when violence flares, though the shutdowns now are more targeted. When a reporter for the New York Times visited the remote oasis town of Hotan in southern Xinjiang in August 2013 to report on a violent clash between Uighurs and police on June 28, 2013, he found that cell-phone service in the area had been cut for weeks following the incident and that residents still had no Internet access." (FP, 21 April 2014)

A June 2014 article of the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) mentions the suspension of access to WeChat and several other instant-messaging services in Hotan, which was said to have suffered several recent attacks (WSJ, 24 June 2014).

The above-mentioned FP article writes on restrictions on access to the Internet and authorities' stance towards the use of proxy servers to access banned web content:

"While it's possible for Uighurs or others in Xinjiang to access forbidden content through proxy servers, which provide online anonymity, most shy away from this option because the government clearly associates such use with terrorism and crime. In March, Xinjiang's top Communist Party official, Zhang Chunxian, told reporters at the annual meeting of the National People's Congress, China's legislature, that 90 percent of 'violent terrorists' use virtual private networks, which obscure a computer's location, to circumvent China's web controls and watch extremist videos. He didn't elaborate and offered no proof to back up the assertion." (FP, 21 April 2014)

The same article quotes Zheng Liang, a lecturer at Xinjiang University in Urumqi, who researches media and ethnic minorities, as saying that Xinjiang's Uyghur-language webspace (in stark contrast to the Uyghur diaspora web) is "less dynamic" than the rest of the Chinese web and that owners of websites are "afraid to get in trouble" and thus practice self-censorship. (FP, 21 April 2014)

A November 2015 Radio Free Asia (RFA) article states that ten pupils at a school in Akyol township in Xinjiang's Aksu (Akesu) prefecture were detained for watching banned Uyghur-language videos on their mobile phones. According to the father of Eli Mamut, one of the detained, his son "had no idea that the videos [had been] classified as illegal by the authorities" in September 2014. However, the same report quotes a teacher at the school as saying that 13 people had been detained by police for Internet offences. The father later received an official notice saying that his son has been "relocated from a detention center in Aksu to our camp in order to implement his life sentence [for] ... leading a terrorist group". Eli Mamut's father is also quoted as saying that eight of his son's classmates were handed out sentences ranging from two to 20 years in prison for "participating in a terrorist group". The RFA article adds that "Aykol township became a major focus of a crackdown by Chinese authorities after a violent incident that occurred there during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan in July and early August 2013". The incident "left at least three people dead and 50 injured when authorities fired on a crowd of Uyghur protesters". (RFA, 16 November 2015)

A January 2016 RFA article reports that police in three prefectures in the XUAR (Hotan (Hetian), Kashgar (Kashi) and Aksu (Akesu) have "stepped up and extended security checks of ethnic Uyghurs who use smartphones into the new year to ensure stability in the area", quoting local police and Uyghur residents:

"Police in Hotan (in Chinese, Hetian) manned security checkpoints in Hotan for 24 hours when the new year began to check smartphones and other electronic devices that could connect to the Internet for Islamic extremist or religious texts and videos, said a Uyghur officer at Mokuyla Township Police Station in Hotan's Guma (Pishan) county, who declined to give his name.

Uyghur residents in Kashgar (Kashi) and Aksu (Akesu) prefectures of Xinjiang also reported that police had increased their checks of young people with smartphones around the turn of the new year in the following the Paris terrorist attacks by Islamic extremists in November.

Police in Hotan have been conducting smartphone checks since last May. They are one of several measures, including daily patrols in villages and identification checks of worshippers at mosques in Uyghur areas of Xinjiang to prevent 'extremist' activists and attacks and maintain stability.

Initially, police focused on checking young people's smartphones, the Uyghur officer said, but increased manpower at the end of the year and beginning of 2016 to check everyone with the handsets." (RFA, 8 January 2016)

The same article states with reference to the same Uyghur police officer quoted above:

“Authorities detained two young people in Lengger village who ‘illegally’ tried to access websites to view religious content, he said. Township police sent them to a political education camp, organized by the county law office, for 100 days so they could change what authorities consider extremist ideas and learn the Communist Party’s ethnic harmony rules and policy on religion, the officer said.” (RFA, 8 January 2016)

Mashable, a British-American news website that focuses on new developments in the social media field, notes that authorities in the XUAR are reportedly “shutting down the phone services of people who use foreign messaging apps” including Whatsapp, which is not blocked in China, unlike other foreign messaging apps such as Facebook Messenger and Line. With regard to the use of Whatsapp, the same article notes that “while direct intervention from the police appears to be new, Xinjiang’s users have been complaining about being blocked from WhatsApp for a while, already.” (Mashable, 24 November 2015)

A June 2014 article of the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) states that after the 2009 Urumqi riots, authorities have “shut several Uighur-language websites hosted in China”. While some of these websites have reopened, “they are heavily censored, driving Uighurs to seek content from abroad”:

“Chinese authorities and some Uighurs say people in Xinjiang recently have been using virtual private networks, or VPNs, to get past censors. Zhang Chunxian, Xinjiang's Communist Party chief, was quoted by state media in March saying 90% of terrorists in Xinjiang used VPNs. Chinese authorities and some Uighurs say banned material has spread via flash drives and Chinese social-media services like WeChat that are harder to censor because messages are typically shared in private groups.” (WSJ, 24 June 2014)

### 4.3 Freedom of assembly

Article 35 of the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China, adopted in December 1982, and amended as of March 2004, provides that citizens of the PRC enjoy freedom of assembly (Constitution of the People’s Republic of China, 14 March 2004, Article 35).

Referring to the PRC in general, the April 2016 USDOS *Country Report on Human Rights Practices* states:

“While the law provides for freedom of peaceful assembly, the government severely restricted this right. The law stipulates that such activities may not challenge ‘party leadership’ or infringe upon the ‘interests of the state.’ Protests against the political system or national leaders were prohibited. Authorities denied permits and quickly suppressed demonstrations involving expression of dissenting political views.” (USDOS, 13 April 2016, section 2b)

A May 2014 Reuters article mentions that the right to assembly is heavily restricted in Xinjiang (Reuters, 30 May 2014).

A May 2014 RFA article states that police opened fire during a demonstration in Aksu (Akesu) prefecture, reportedly killing two protesters, and detained more than 100 other Uyghurs:

“Authorities in China’s Xinjiang region detained more than 100 ethnic minority Uyghurs who took part in mass protests this week against the detention of women and middle school girls for wearing headscarves, as local officials confirmed that at least two protesters have been shot dead.

Police on Tuesday fired on protesters as they threatened to storm a government building in Alaqagha township in Aksu prefecture’s Kucha county following the detention earlier that day of up to 25 Uyghur women and girls who had refused government instructions to uncover their faces partly covered by their headscarves.

At least five protesters were struck by gunfire, ‘with two left dead at the scene,’ said Alaqagha village leader Ehmet Memet, speaking to RFA’s Uyghur Service.” (RFA, 23 May 2014b)

In April 2015, the Agence France-Presse (AFP) news agency reported about violence in Elishku township in Yarkand (Shache) county in July 2014. According to official accounts, 96 people were killed “when militants attacked a police station in the township”. However, “[r]esidents, speaking to foreign media for the first time, say that hundreds of people mounted a protest against government restrictions on religion which was brutally put down.” The article quotes a local resident as saying that “[e]veryone who joined the crowd is either dead or in jail”. (AFP, 28 April 2015)

As BBC News mentions, state media referred to the July 2014 incident in Yarkant (Shache) county as a “terror attack”, while activists reported that “police opened fire on people protesting against a Ramadan crackdown on Muslims” (BBC News, 26 September 2014b). According to the October 2015 USDOS *Report on International Religious Freedom*, these protests had “stemmed from the detention of women and girls who had refused to uncover their faces covered by headscarves” (USDOS, 14 October 2015, section 2).

A July 2014 article of the Financial Times (FT) notes that police in Xinjiang “opened fire on protesting Uighur crowds in Xinjiang on several occasions” during the previous months (FT, 31 July 2014).

In February 2014, RFA reports on an incident in Tusul village outside Hotan (Hetian), where “[p]olice fired tear gas to disperse hundreds of ethnic minority Uyghurs angry at a crackdown on motorcyclists at a marketplace” after “hundreds of shoppers surrounded a group of about ten policemen involved in the crackdown” (RFA, 28 February 2014).

#### **4.4 Freedom of movement**

Freedom House states in its *Freedom in the World 2016*, which covers the year 2015, that while the household registration (hukou) requirements for Xinjiang were relaxed by officials “in a manner that sparked an increase in Han Chinese migration in 2015 into areas that had been predominantly Uighur”, there were complaints by some Uyghurs “that their own ability

to migrate within the region to the same urban areas remained restricted”. The same report notes that “[m]illions of people”, including many Uyghurs, are “affected by restrictions on foreign travel and passports”. (Freedom House, 27 January 2016)

A January 2016 New York Times (NYT) article states that “[s]ince 2014, Uighurs seeking to travel outside their hometowns have been required to carry a special card that lists phone numbers for the holder’s landlord and local police station”. As the article notes, many Uyghurs complain that these so-called “convenience contact cards” single them out for scrutiny. (NYT, 2 January 2016)

A July 2015 Human Rights Watch (HRW) report notes that “a two-track system” for the issuance of passports has been “gradually put in place” in China since 2002, with one track that is “quick and straightforward” and another that is “extremely slow”. As the report states, the “two-track passport system thus allows residents of ethnic Chinese areas of China to travel abroad easily, but denies residents of Tibetan, Uyghur, and some Hui areas equal access to foreign travel”. The report provides the following details on this system:

“Official documents from Tibetan and other areas with slow-track processing show that these restrictions, though also affecting ethnic Chinese residents of those areas, were initially designed in part to stop Tibetan Buddhists, Uyghurs, and Hui Muslims from religiously motivated travel — for Tibetans, attendance at teachings of the Dalai Lama in India; for certain Muslims, independent pilgrimages to Mecca. Chinese authorities appear to regard these forms of travel as a potential cover for subversive political activity [...].

[...] These policies and their implementation do not apply to all Tibetans, Uyghurs or Muslims in China, since those registered as residents of cities such as Beijing or Chengdu can obtain passports in the same way as any other resident of that area. Rather, they apply only to certain areas in China that have substantial Tibetan or Muslim populations.” (HRW, 13 July 2015, pp. 1-2)

The October 2015 annual report of the US Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) mentions the following restrictions on foreign travel for Uyghurs:

“In March, officials in Ili prefecture, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), ordered residents to turn in their passports to authorities, apparently as part of a regional security crackdown that critics said violates Uyghur residents’ freedom of movement. As the Commission has observed in previous years, XUAR authorities reportedly restricted the ability of Muslims to travel abroad on pilgrimage, allowing only government-organized group travel.” (CECC, 8 October 2015, p. 165)

The April 2016 USDOS *Country Report on Human Rights Practices*, which covers the year 2015, states the following:

“Uighurs, particularly those residing in the XUAR, reported great difficulty in getting passport applications approved at the local level. They were frequently denied passports to travel abroad, particularly to Saudi Arabia for the Hajj, other Muslim countries, or Western countries for academic purposes. Authorities reportedly seized valid passports

of some XUAR residents. Family members of Uyghur activists living overseas were also denied visas to enter China.” (USDOS, 13 April 2016, section 2d)

A March 2014 thematic country of origin information report of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, BZ) refers to several sources as indicating that Uyghurs encounter greater difficulty than other PRC nationals when applying for travel documents. Ethnic Uyghurs from the XUAR in particular reported that it was difficult to apply for passports locally. They were frequently denied passports for foreign travel, especially for the hajj to Saudi Arabia and travel to other Muslim or Western countries for study and other purposes. There were reports that authorities confiscated valid passports from Uyghur holders. (BZ, 3 March 2014, p. 3)

As an April 2015 Agence France-Presse (AFP) article states, after the violent events in Elishku township in Yarkand (Shache) county in July 2014, “all the villagers were placed under house arrest for 20 days, locals said, with homes searched one by one, and they are still subject to restrictions on their movements” (AFP, 28 April 2015).

Referring to the July 2014 violence in Elishku, an April 2015 report of the Union of Catholic Asian News (UCA News), a Hong Kong-based news network that covers issues in Asia that are of interest to the Catholic Church, refers to villagers as saying that “increased restrictions on movement are beginning to chip away at their livelihoods, preventing them from seeking better prices for their crops elsewhere” (UCA News, 28 April 2015).

As Radio Free Asia (RFA) reports in June 2015, a young Uyghur woman was “detained by Chinese police in February [2015] while attempting to flee the country to join her husband in Turkey” and subsequently died in Shaptol Township police station in Peyziwat (Jiashi) county (Kashgar prefecture) (RFA, 26 June 2015).

As a January 2015 article RFA reports with reference to official media, “authorities in the southwestern region of Guangxi shot dead two ethnic minority Uyghurs after they tried to cross the border into neighboring Vietnam”. The article goes on to note:

“According to the report, the suspects attacked police officers after being forced to stop by two police cars. Exile Uyghur organizations however said that Chinese authorities may have used excessive force against the Uyghurs fleeing a ‘campaign of terror’ against the ethnic minority group, which claim to have long suffered ethnic discrimination, oppressive religious controls, and continued poverty and joblessness.” (RFA, 19 January 2015)

A June 2014 RFA article reports that ethnic Uyghur traders and businesspeople living in or travelling to Tibet have been placed under “heightened scrutiny by Chinese police following an escalation of violence in their homeland in the Xinjiang region”:

“New security measures include restrictions on freedom of movement and close inspection at checkpoints on roads leading to Tibet’s regional capital Lhasa, one Uyghur trader and longtime resident of Tibet told RFA’s Uyghur Service on Monday. ‘It is very

difficult now for Uyghurs to move freely from one place to another,' he said, vowing to abandon Tibet, which has been his home for more than a decade, and return to Xinjiang.

A Uyghur shoe-store owner living in Lhasa confirmed the new restrictions, saying 'Since the end of last year, everything has changed, and official attitudes and police behavior toward Uyghurs have grown worse.' 'Police and plainclothes security officers come to our homes and shops each week to check on our situation,' the source told RFA, adding that local hotels and landlords now refuse to rent rooms, houses, or apartments to Uyghurs." (RFA, 10 June 2014)

An August 2014 article of the Canadian *The Globe and Mail* newspaper states:

"Travel for Uighurs is difficult. In rural areas, locals need permission just to leave their villages. Roads are dotted with checkpoints, often minutes apart, where ID cards must be presented. Passports are almost impossible to obtain (unless an applicant can afford to pay a bribe as high as 300,000 renminbi, or \$52,000). For most, travel to the Hajj is not worth attempting." (The *Globe and Mail*, 15 August 2014)

#### 4.5 Freedom of religion

Article 36 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, adopted in December 1982, amended as of March 2004, states that citizens of the PRC "enjoy freedom of religious belief (Constitution of the People's Republic of China, 14 March 2004, Article 36).

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) notes the following developments in its April 2015 *Annual Report 2015*, which covers the year 2014:

"On May 25, 2014, just days after Uighur suicide bombings at an Urumqi marketplace killed 39 people and injured nearly 100, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced a campaign against terrorism in Xinjiang that has led to a wide-scale crackdown on religious expression. [...]

Central and regional government authorities conflate religion with extremism, assigning the terrorist label to all Uighur Muslims in an attempt to justify their draconian and extrajudicial actions with what they assert is a legitimate war against terrorism." (USCIRF, 30 April 2015, p. 34)

The US Department of State (USDOS) states in its October 2015 *Report on International Religious Freedom*, which covers the year 2014, that "[i]n Xinjiang, the government cited concerns over the three evils – 'separatism, religious extremism, and terrorism' – as a reason to enact and enforce repressive restrictions on religious practices of Uighur Muslims". The same report states that "[h]uman rights organizations reported in some instances security forces shot at groups of Uighurs in their homes or during worship[,] characteri[sing] these operations as targeting 'separatists' or 'terrorists.'" The same source notes that "[a]uthorities often failed to distinguish between peaceful religious practice and criminal or terrorist activities" and that "[i]t remained difficult to determine whether particular raids, detentions, arrests, or judicial punishments targeted those seeking political goals, the right to worship, or criminal acts." (USDOS, 14 October 2015, section 2)



As Freedom House writes in its *Freedom in the World 2016* with regard to the year 2015, “[a]uthorities in Xinjiang continued to impose restrictions on religious attire, beards, and fasting during the holy month of Ramadan, in some cases sentencing violators to prison” (Freedom House, 27 January 2016).

A March 2016 Radio Free Asia (RFA) article states that in September 2015, an imam, who was arrested in May 2015, “received a nine-year sentence [...] for teaching religion illegally” in Aksu (Akesu) prefecture’s Peyshenbebazar village. Furthermore, the article notes that in February 2015, eight farmers from the same village were each handed out “a seven-year sentence for praying together in places that authorities had not designated for Muslim worship”. They had been arrested in September of 2014. (RFA, 16 March 2016)

A March 2015 RFA article reports on 25 persons put on trial for activities related to teaching religion or attending religious classes:

“Authorities [...] put on trial 25 people who were teaching Islamic religious studies or sending their children to schools that offered such classes, local officials said. The Uyghurs involved were taken to a public square in handcuffs and shackles to stand trial on charges of endangering state security on March 21 in Qarasay town in Qaraqash (Moyu in Chinese) county in Hotan (Hetian in Chinese) prefecture, they said. Four of the 25 were teachers, six were students, and the rest were parents and people who provided venues for the religious instruction, they said.” (RFA, 27 March 2015)

Related to this trial, Human Rights Watch (HRW) writes in its *World Report 2016*, “[i]n March [2015], a Hotan court convicted 25 Uyghurs of ‘endangering state security’ for their participation in ‘illegal’ religious studies—in this case, private religious classes (HRW, 27 January 2016).

An RFA article from April 2015 reports on a demolition of the home of a Uyghur Muslim family hosting unofficial religious studies:

“Authorities in northwestern China’s restive Xinjiang region have demolished the home of an ethnic Uyghur Muslim family that had served as an underground school for Quranic studies, according to local officials and residents. On March 24, officials from Qarasay town in Hotan (Hetian) prefecture’s Qaraqash (in Chinese, Moyu) county ordered some 500 local villagers to watch as workers tore down the home of Mettursun Qasim to set an example for those who support unofficial religious studies, sources said.” (RFA, 1 April 2015)

Reuters (Reuters, 11 November 2014) and RFA report on jail sentences for 22 Uyghurs, among them religious leaders accused of preaching illegally:

“Twenty-two Uyghurs, including Muslim religious leaders accused of preaching illegally, received jail terms ranging from five to 16 years at a public sentencing in the western Xinjiang town of Kashgar, according to Chinese state media. Some of the religious leaders sentenced had been relieved of their positions, the reports said. Other Uyghurs were

accused of inciting ethnic hatred, using superstition to undermine the law, starting quarrels to provoke trouble, and rape.” (RFA, 11 November 2014)

The October 2015 USDOS *Report on International Religious Freedom* notes that in 2014, authorities approved a ban on religious practice in government buildings and wearing clothing associated with “religious extremism”, and another ban on the “wearing of Islamic veils in public in the capital city of Urumqi” following months of what the USDOS refers to as “increasingly restrictive policies” for Uyghur Muslims (USDOS, 14 October 2015, Executive Summary).

The same USDOS report notes that in March 2014, “the People’s High Court, Department of Public Security, Department of Culture, and Department of Industry and Commerce in Xinjiang announced a ‘joint crackdown’ on videos and audio recordings the government defined as promoting terrorism, religious extremism, and separatism”. The notice stated that it was “forbidden to disseminate such materials on the internet, social media, and online marketplaces”. As the USDOS goes on to note, “[a]s part of this ‘joint crackdown,’ the Xinjiang government announced on its website that police could randomly stop individuals to check their mobile phones for any sensitive content”. The same source points to reports saying that many Uyghurs “subsequently opted to delete any religious content on their mobile devices, including Arabic audio files of Quran readings and photos featuring women in conservative religious dress”. (USDOS, 14 October 2015, section 2)

The Amnesty International *Report 2015/16* states that “[o]n 1 January new ‘Enforcement of Religious Affairs Regulations’ came into effect” in the XUAR. As the report notes, the proclaimed objective of the regulations are to “more tightly controlling online communications, and clamping down on the role of religion in ‘marriage, funerals, culture, the arts, and sports’”. (AI, 24 February 2016)

The Diplomat writes in a July 2015 article with regard to restrictions of Uyghurs on their religious expression and way of life:

“Compared to the Hui Muslim communities of central and eastern China, Uyghurs face many more restrictions on their religious expression and way of life. While Xinjiang houses many distinctive mosques, women, students, and public servants face significant restrictions on entering them. Praying in schools, wearing headscarves to work, and fasting during Ramadan are also severely circumscribed. The study of the Qur’an and Arabic is tightly controlled. Even the Uyghur language is being gradually phased out in most educational institutions in Xinjiang. The increasing security presence in the region, whether in the form of ‘re-educating’ religious leaders or the installation of surveillance cameras and sharp increases in inspection routes, serve to ensure that religious institutions do not advocate Islamic values that are not endorsed by the Chinese state.” (The Diplomat, 28 July 2015)

The HRW *World Report 2016* states that these “comprehensive yet vaguely worded” religious affairs regulations “prohibit ‘extremist’ attire and ban ‘activities that damage the physical and mental health of citizens.’” (HRW, 27 January 2016).

The USCIRF states in its April 2015 *Annual Report 2015*, which covers the year 2014:

“Local authorities’ efforts to suppress so-called ‘religious extremism’ [...] have resulted in Uighur Muslims being detained and sentenced to jail for religious attire, unofficial publications of Islamic teachings, religious gatherings, and religious activities. In addition, during the year numerous mosques were raided, ‘illegal’ imams and religious personnel detained or dismissed, and unofficial Islamic publications confiscated.” (USCIRF, 30 April 2015, p. 34)

The October 2015 USDOS *Report on International Religious Freedom* also notes an “increased pressure in official campaigns in Xinjiang to dissuade women from wearing religious clothing and men from wearing beards”. The same report states that authorities across Xinjiang took various measures and actions:

“Officials singled out lawyers and their families in these campaigns. The Xinjiang judicial affairs department website posted a statement in July [2014] saying, ‘Lawyers must commit to guaranteeing that family members and relatives do not wear burqas, veils, or participate in illegal religious activities, and that young men do not grow long beards.’

In January newly appointed Hotan Municipal Government Party Secretary Chen Yuanhua asked all public and private medical organizations in Hotan to refuse service to women in religious dress, according to RFA. Chen stated that hospitals and clinics that treated women in religious dress, including veils, hijabs, and jilbabs, would risk losing their business licenses. This measure also forbade patients from performing the daily prayers while convalescing in hospitals or clinics.

Authorities in Bulaqsui reportedly kept ‘stability maintenance’ registers that included information such as whether female Muslims wore a veil. Uighur sources also reported recipients of public welfare stipends were asked to sign a pledge not to cover their faces for religious reasons.

During July [2014] Kashgar Prefecture forced all current and retired government employees to sign a pledge not to grow long beards or wear veils during Ramadan, according to RFA. At least 70 Uighurs were arrested in Kashgar and Aksu Prefectures in April [2014] for growing long beards, possessing ‘illegal’ religious materials, and for gathering, according to RFA. [...]

Authorities in Karamay banned individuals with long beards or veils from boarding buses in August, with the stated reason of temporarily strengthening security during a sports competition.” (USDOS, 14 October 2015, section 2)

Moreover, the USDOS report notes that “[o]n November 28 [2014], the Xinjiang People’s Congress Standing Committee approved a regulation banning the practice of religion in government buildings and wearing clothes associated with ‘religious extremism,’ due to be implemented in January 2015” (USDOS, 14 October 2015, section 2).

The same report also states that “[o]n December 10 [2014], the Urumqi city People’s Congress Standing Committee approved a separate ban on the wearing of Islamic veils in public in the capital city of Urumqi, with an implementation date of February 1, 2015” (USDOS, 14 October 2015, section 2).

With regard to the observance of Ramadan, the USCIRF states in its April 2015 *Annual Report 2015*, which covers the year 2014:

“In 2014, Xinjiang authorities again banned the observance of Ramadan throughout that region, and reportedly enforced the ban more thoroughly than in past years. In some locations, local authorities forbade party officials and public servants from holding iftar dinners breaking the day’s fast or held festivities unrelated to Ramadan as a test to determine if Muslims would comply with the fasting ban; in some cases, individuals who fasted were arrested and detained.” (USCIRF, 30 April 2015, p. 34)

A September 2014 article of the Jamestown Foundation (JF) describes restrictions during Ramadan:

“During this year’s holy month of Ramadan in June and July, the fasting ban focused mainly on Uyghur elites, such as civil servants, Party members and students, as local government agencies, state-run companies and public schools required or encouraged Uyghurs to break their fast by eating during the day. At the beginning of the holy month, ethnic-religious and United Front officials in Hami (Qumul in Uyghur) held meetings on how to strengthen control over fasting during Ramadan (Hami Government, June 30). Leveraging their control over Uyghur Party cadres, local governments provided free meals for lunch, while cadres monitored them for compliance, namely, observing whether the Uyghurs ate their meals and thus broke their fast. Furthermore, these government institutions organized parties and celebrations offering food during the daylight hours throughout Ramadan. For example, the Tarim River Basin Management Bureau celebrated the anniversary of the founding of the CCP by holding a dinner party for its predominantly Uyghur employees on June 28, the first day of Ramadan this year (Tarim Basin Management Bureau, June 30). Similarly, the Pishan County (Guma nahiyisi in Uyghur) Industry and Commerce Bureau held ‘sincere conversation’ meetings to prevent its Uyghur employees from fasting during Ramadan Xinjiang Administrative Bureau for Industry and Commerce, July 3). Additionally, Uyghur business owners were punished if they closed their shops or restaurants during the day, as is customary in many parts of the Muslim world during Ramadan. [...]

More recently, the Xinjiang government has instituted a unique suite of religious policies aimed at Uyghurs, in contrast to the softer approaches to religion in other provinces of China. In March 2012, Uyghur civil servants and retired teachers were forced to sign agreements that they would not practice Islam (Radio Free Asia, March 21, 2012). More recently, the Xinjiang government issued a special identification card in Xinjiang to control domestic travel. [...]

These events appear to reflect a growing trend of Uyghur resistance that is likely exacerbated by current Xinjiang local provincial policies. More importantly, since Uyghur

cadres bear the brunt of the religious regulations, they are forced to choose between their religious identity as Muslims and their occupation as CCP officials. This complicates their role as a bridge between the atheist CCP and the larger Uyghur population. The restrictions on religious expression among Uyghur elites have pushed them far from the state and closer to their own group, which will likely further polarize Xinjiang societal relations between the Uyghurs and the Han.” (JF, 10 September 2014)

The October 2015 USDOS report elaborates on “strict controls on religious practice during Ramadan” imposed by the XUAR authorities:

“The government barred teachers, professors, civil servants, and CCP members from fasting and attending religious services at mosques. Local authorities reportedly fined individuals for studying the Quran in unauthorized sessions, detained people for ‘illegal’ religious activities or carrying ‘illegal’ religious materials, and stationed security personnel in and around mosques to restrict attendance to local residents. Authorities reportedly hung Chinese flags on mosque walls in the direction of Mecca so prayers would be directed toward them.

Uighurs in Kashgar and Turpan reported officials interfered with fasting during Ramadan. In July local authorities in Xinjiang continued the annual practice of banning government employees and their family members from fasting during Ramadan. As part of the government’s stability maintenance campaign, students and teachers in Karghilik County signed a pledge in June not to fast or participate in religious activities, according to the Karghilik County Education Bureau website. The Kashgar Teachers College forced students to drink water during Ramadan and students were asked to partake in group lunches by their teachers to ensure they were not fasting during the day, reported Radio Free Asia. [...]

Muslims reported difficulties taking part in state-sanctioned Hajj travel due to the inability to obtain travel documents in a timely manner and difficulties in meeting criteria required for participation in the official Hajj program run by the China Islamic Association. The government restricted the ability of Uighur Muslims to make private Hajj pilgrimages outside of the government-organized program. Ethnic and religious committee staff from across Xinjiang were sent to international airports in China in June and July to ensure Uighurs were not making private Hajj pilgrimages outside of government sanctioned programs, a government source reported.

Authorities continued their ‘patriotic education’ campaign, which in part focused on preventing any illegal religious activities in Xinjiang.

There were widespread reports of prohibitions on children participating in religious activities in various localities throughout Xinjiang, but observers also reported seeing children in mosques and at Friday prayers in some areas of the region. In August and September state newspapers reported hundreds of children were ‘rescued’ and dozens of persons were detained in a sweep of ‘illegal’ religious schools.

The government continued to restrict religious education in institutions across the country. Islamic schools in Yunnan Province were reluctant to accept ethnic Uighur students out of concern that they would bring unwanted attention from government authorities and negatively affect school operations, according to local sources. Kunming Islamic College, a government-affiliated seminary, posted an official announcement stating it primarily accepted students from Yunnan, Sichuan, and Guizhou Provinces, as well as the Chongqing Special Municipality.

Hui Muslims in Ningxia, Gansu, Qinghai, and Yunnan provinces engaged in religious practice with less government interference than did Uighurs, according to local sources. [...]

Media reported government employees in Xinjiang were being forced to sign guarantees they would refrain from religious or political expression. The penalty for not signing could be barring their children from entering university or being subject to administrative investigation.” (USDOS, 14 October 2015, section 2)

“In Xinjiang, tension between Uighur Muslims and ethnic Han continued, as officials strengthened their enforcement of policies banning men from growing long beards, women from wearing veils that covered their faces, and parents from providing their children with religious education. Many hospitals and businesses would not provide services to women wearing veils. Tensions also continued among ethnic and religious groups in Tibetan areas, particularly between Han and Tibetans, and, in some areas, between Tibetans and Hui Muslims.

Despite labor law provisions against discrimination in hiring based on religious belief, some employers openly discriminated against religious believers. Protestants stated they were terminated by their employers due to their religious activities. Muslims in Xinjiang faced discrimination in hiring, lost their positions, and were detained by authorities for praying in their workplaces.” (USDOS, 14 October 2015, section 3)

As Freedom House writes in its *Freedom in the World 2016* with regard to the year 2015, “[a]uthorities in Xinjiang continued to impose restrictions on religious attire, beards, and fasting during the holy month of Ramadan, in some cases sentencing violators to prison” (Freedom House, 27 January 2016).

The Amnesty International *Report 2015/16* states that “[a]s in previous years numerous counties posted notices on their websites stating that primary and secondary school students and Communist Party members should not be permitted to observe Ramadan.” (AI, 24 February 2016).

As a June 2015 Agence France-Presse (AFP) news agency article notes, the officially atheist CPC has “for years [...] restricted the practice in Xinjiang”. Referring to official website notices that appeared as the holy month of Ramadan began in June 2015, the article notes that authorities have “banned civil servants, students and teachers” in the XUAR “from fasting

during Ramadan” and “ordered restaurants to stay open”. The article goes on to provide details about further policies regarding Ramadan:

“Going one step beyond simply discouraging government employees to forgo fasting, police and court officials in Awat county were ordered to ‘take the lead in teaching family members not to fast and not to participate in Ramadan-related religious activities’, according to a post on China Legal Media. As in previous years, school children were included in directives limiting Ramadan fasting and other religious observances. The education bureau of Tarbaghatay city, known as Tacheng in Chinese, this month ordered schools to communicate to students that ‘during Ramadan, ethnic minority students do not fast, do not enter mosques... and do not attend religious activities’. Similar orders were posted on the websites of other Xinjiang education bureaus and schools. Officials in the region's Qiemo county this week met with local religious leaders to inform them there would be increased inspections during Ramadan in order to ‘maintain social stability’, the county's official website said. Ahead of the holy month, one village in Yili, near the border with Kazakhstan, said mosques must check the identification cards of anyone who comes to pray during Ramadan, according to a notice on the government's website.” (AFP, 18 June 2015)

In July 2015, France 24, a Paris-based international news and current affairs television channel, states that students at the Xinjiang Medical University in Urumqi were forced to eat water melons during Ramadan. The students were threatened that their diplomas would be taken away if they refused to eat. (France 24, 1 July 2015)

The same France 24 report notes that civil servants in the XUAR have come under strong pressure to refrain from taking part in religious practices linked to Ramadan such as fasting and gathering for prayer and to discourage “discouraging friends, family, and colleagues from observing religious rituals” (France 24, 1 July 2015).

In a January 2016 article, the New York Times (NYT) writes that authorities in Kashgar have “banned mosques from broadcasting the call to prayer, forcing muezzins to shout out the invocation five times a day from rooftops across the city”. The article notes that this rule comes as “an addition to longstanding policies that prohibit after-school religious classes and children under 18 from entering mosques”. (NYT, 2 January 2016)

The same NYT article also states that authorities in Hotan have taken a decision “to outlaw two dozen names considered too Muslim, forcing parents to rename their children or be unable to register them for school” (NYT, 2 January 2016).

The same article goes on to quote an Uyghur woman in Urumqi as saying that many people are “serving three- or four-year sentences for violating religious regulations that provide no avenue for appeal” (NYT, 2 January 2016).

In its *State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2015* report published in July 2015, Minority Rights Group International (MRG), a UK-based NGO working for the rights of ethnic and religious minorities worldwide, mentions that “authorities in the city of Karamay

banned men with long beards and people with headscarves, veils or clothing with the crescent moon and star from boarding public buses” (MRG, 2 July 2015, p. 186).

#### 4.6 Exercise of political rights

The Criminal Law of the PRC, adopted on 1 July 1979 and amended on 14 March 1997, lists “deprivation of political rights” as one possible form of punishment for offences including participation in activities aiming at “splitting the State or undermining [the] unity of the country” or “incit[ing] others” to do the same (Article 103), or at “subverting the State power or overthrowing the socialist system” (Article 105). (This does not apply to “ringleaders” of such actions or persons who “take an active part” in them, who are to be sentenced to “fixed-term imprisonment” under the law). (Criminal Law of the People’s Republic of China, 14 March 1997)

The Freedom House *Freedom in the World 2016* report, which covers the year 2015, states that “[t]he CCP does not tolerate any form of organized opposition or independent political parties” and that “[c]itizens who attempt to form opposition parties or advocate for democratic reforms have been sentenced to long prison terms” (Freedom House, 27 January 2016).

As the April 2016 USDOS states in its *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2015*, which covers 2015, in China, “[t]he law protects an individual’s ability to petition the government, but persons petitioning the government faced restrictions on their rights to assemble and raise grievances” (USDOS, 13 April 2016, section 2b).

A January 2016 RFA article reports about the case of Ghojimemet Abdujappar, a Uyghur petitioner who is serving a three-year prison sentence in Hotan (Hetian) prefecture for “illegal petitioning” because “he and some family members traveled to Beijing in May 2010 to complain to central government authorities and foreign diplomats about inadequate compensation for the confiscation of his land” in Xinjiang:

“After the group visited the United Nations’ office and the U.S., British and German embassies, police took them to the Xinjiang region’s administrative offices in the capital before sending them back home. After Abdujappar returned to Hotan, authorities arrested and jailed him for three years for illegal petitioning.” (RFA, 20 January 2016)

In a June 2013 article, RFA reports about a land confiscation case affecting residents of Baykol village in Qaradong township of Ghulja city (Ili prefecture) and quotes a local farmer as saying that when farmers “go to petition the authorities”, no one would listen to their complaints, and the authorities would “forcibly take [them] back home”. (RFA, 3 June 2013)

With regard to freedom of association in China, the April 2016 USDOS *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2015* notes:

“The law provides for freedom of association, but the government restricted this right. CCP policy and government regulations require that all professional, social, and economic organizations officially register with and receive approval from the government. These



regulations prevented the formation of autonomous political, human rights, religious, spiritual, labor, and other organizations that the government believed might challenge its authority in any area. The government maintained tight controls over civil society organizations.” (USDOS, 13 April 2016, section 2b)

Imprisoned Uyghur academic Ilham Tohti wrote in an article that was first posted in Chinese after his arrest in January 2015 and published in English translation on the China Change website in May 2015. The article elaborates on the representation of ethnic Uyghurs in government and organs of the CPC:

“Uighur officials account for a very small proportion of total government officials, and Uighurs who occupy positions of real power – bureau-level cadres or higher – are even rarer. Some powerful governmental departments such as Finance, Public Security and the SASAC [State-Owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission] have virtually no Uighur officials. The situation is even more glaring in Xinjiang’s state-owned enterprises: one would be hard-pressed to cite even a single example of a state-owned enterprise headed by a Uighur. Whether in the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference [CPPCC], the National People’s Congress [NPC], or the Communist Party Congress, the number of Uighur committee members and representatives is disproportionately low. [...]

In the Twelfth National Committee of the CPPCC, only 10 members [of 2,237] are Uighur, continuing the downward trend of recent years. And of the 107 members of the Xinjiang CPPCC new Standing Committee, only 27 (about 25%) are Uighur. [...]

Of the 2987 delegates who attended the 12th National People’s Congress this year, only 409 were ethnic minorities, an average of one delegate for every 270,000 ethnic minority citizens. Among the minority delegates, only 25 were Uighur (23 from the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, and 2 from the People’s Liberation Army delegation), which works out to one delegate for every 400,000 Uighur citizens. Although the overall proportion of minority delegates exceeded the proportion of ethnic minorities relative to China’s total population, the opposite was true for Uighur delegates, whose numbers were disproportionately low.” (Tohti, 6 May 2015)

For more information relating to exercise of political rights, please consult [sections 2.4](#) (Political landscape), [section 4.1](#) (Freedom of expression) and [section 4.3](#) (Freedom of assembly) of this compilation.

#### **4.7 Access to labour and education**

Article 12 of the Labour Law of the People’s Republic of China stipulates that “[l]aborers shall not be discriminated against in employment due to their nationality, race, sex, or religious belief” (Labour Law of the People’s Republic of China, 5 July 1994, Article 12).

Article 3 of the Law of People’s Republic of China on Promotion and Employment states:

“Workers enjoy the right to employment on equal footing and to choice of jobs on their own initiative in accordance with law. In seeking employment, workers shall not be

subject to discrimination because of their ethnic backgrounds, race, gender, religious beliefs, etc” (Law of People’s Republic of China on Promotion and Employment, 30 August 2007, Article 3).

ChinaChange.org, which describes itself as a website devoted to bring English translations of news and commentary in relation to civil society, rule of law, and rights activities in China, posted an article of the convicted Uyghur scholar Ilham Tohti on the issue of unemployment in Xinjiang in April 2015. The article was first published in Chinese on the Daxiong Gonghui website after Ilham Tohti was taken into custody in January 2014. ChinaChange.org quotes Daxiong Gonghui describing the origin of the article “written by Ilham Tohti, associate professor of economics at Minzu University of China (formerly Central Nationalities University), in response to a 2011 request from high-level officials in the Chinese government. Ilham Tohti made first-draft revisions to this document in October of 2013, but was unable to complete a final draft”. The editor of ChinaChange.org says that the post from Daxiong magazine has since been censored and is only available from other sources as a repost. He was, however, able to confirm the origin and the authenticity of the article with the editor of the online Daxiong magazine (Tohti, 22 April 2015). In the article Ilham Tohti writes the following about access to labour in Xinjiang:

“Unemployment is a social issue that affects all regions of China, but Xinjiang’s unemployment problem tends to be concentrated among ethnic minorities. For Uighurs who migrate to the cities in search of work, employment opportunities are markedly limited, confined to a narrow band of service-industry jobs, mostly jobs in restaurants. There is a vast gap in employment opportunities available to different ethnic groups: Uighur and other ethnic-minority job applicants face significant employment discrimination. These factors, in turn, fuel resentment toward the government and toward the Han Chinese majority.” (Tohti, 22 April 2015).

Cheng Jie, an associate researcher from the Institution of Population and Labor Economics at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, describes the employment situation in Xinjiang differently, suggesting that Xinjiang faces a structural problem caused by skills not matching job requirements:

“With its rich agricultural, mineral and energy resources, as well as funding support from the central government, Xinjiang is never short of job opportunities, in fact, it has quite a large labor shortage. The region has attracted 5 million migrant workers, or one-fifth of its total population, making it the biggest importer of labor in western China; every August there are special trains that transport millions of workers into the region to harvest cotton. [...] However, sufficient jobs do not naturally make Xinjiang free from employment problems, because the region has huge structural problems in employment. Its minority groups, which account for over 60 percent of the total population, are not so well-educated and lack the labor skills employers need; even with abundant job vacancies they might still be not able to find a job to suit them. I used to visit an industrial garden in the border city Tacheng prefecture, and surprisingly found several small enterprises employed all their workers from inland provinces, because ‘local people cannot meet the requirements’.” (Cheng, 1 April 2014)

The economist Margaret Maurer-Fazio, Betty Doran Stangle Professor of Applied Economics at Bates College and research fellow at the Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA) in Bonn, Germany, conducted a field experiment in the summer of 2011 to establish the extent of ethnic discrimination in China's job market. The study featured 21,592 applications to 10,796 positions advertised on Internet job boards in 6 Chinese cities. Using names that are typically Han Chinese and distinctively Mongolian, Tibetan, and Uighur and analyzing the call-back rate from employers, the study found "clear evidence of discrimination" as "a disturbingly large percentage (46%) of firms give preference to applicants with Han names, that is, they only call back Han applicants". Women with Uyghur names face even bigger challenges, having to submit 83 percent more applications to get as many callbacks as women with Han names. However, the study also suggests that "Minority candidates applying for jobs posted in one of the two autonomous minority regions included in this study do not experience this type of discrimination" and states that "Uighur applicants in Urumqi experience a positive advantage over Han candidates in their job searches". (Maurer-Fazio, 2012, p. 21).

Anthony Howell, assistant professor of Economics at Peking University, and C. Cindy Fan, professor of Geography and Asian American Studies at UCLA, conducted a survey of Han and Uyghur migrants in the Urumqi labour market, which was published in the academic journal *Eurasian Geography and Economics* in 2011:

"A prevailing characterization of Han and Uyghur groups is that the former is privileged and the latter subordinate. In this paper, we seek to examine that characterization for Han and Uyghur migrants to Urumqi. While early Han migration—from the 1950s to the 1970s—was primarily state-orchestrated, recent Han migrants tend to be self-initiated, and they must compete with Uyghurs in the labor market. Through a comparison of Han and Uyghur migrants, this paper highlights the heterogeneity of the Urumqi labor market and shows that self-initiated Han migrants are not necessarily in a more privileged position than Uyghur migrants who are younger and more highly educated." (Howell/ Fan 2011, pp. 119-120)

"The Uyghur migrants in Xinjiang tend to move from rural to urban areas and from the south to the north. This pattern reflects a persistent spatial inequality between the Han-dominated north and non-Han settlements in the south. The north-south inequality has been further exacerbated by the massive in-migration of Han to Xinjiang." (Howell/ Fan 2011, p. 124)

Minority Rights Group International (MRG) writes about regional differences with regard to poverty and unemployment of Uyghurs in its July 2015 *State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples* report:

"Poverty and unemployment among Uyghurs is worst in the south of Xinjiang, despite government attempts to boost urban development through special economic zones, such as in Kashgar, established in 2011 and scheduled for completion in 2020. Kashgar has partnered with eastern provinces such as Shenzhen and investment companies to secure investment. Zhongkun, for example, has been active in developing tourism in the city but

has been accused of exploitative practices that do not benefit Uyghur residents” (MRG, 2 July 2015, p. 187)

Ilham Tohti elaborates on the north-south dichotomy and unemployment in areas of the rural south:

“The rural labor surplus in Xinjiang is a serious problem. The root cause of this excess rural labor force is lagging urbanization and industrialization in Uighur areas. In fact, the actual urbanization rate among the Uighur population is only about 10%. Most of Xinjiang’s Uighur population is concentrated in the rural south, where the average amount of arable land per capita is less than one mu, or one-sixth of an acre. This sort of marginal existence and inescapable poverty not only bottles up vast reserves of surplus rural labor, it also gives rise to lawlessness and criminal behavior, making these areas potential breeding grounds for future threats to the social order. If this vicious cycle is allowed to continue, it may even bring about the collapse of southern Xinjiang’s fragile oasis ecosystem.” (Tohti, 22 April 2015)

In the article cited above, Ilham Tohti argues that additionally to the rural labor surplus, there is another facet to unemployment in Xinjiang, namely Uyghur university graduates struggling to access the local labour market:

“Given the absence or non-enforcement of national ethnic policies, the primary cause of employment difficulties among minority university students is blatant ethnic discrimination in hiring. Ethnic minorities are severely under-recruited for jobs in the civil service and in state-owned enterprises. Prior to the July 2009 ethnic unrest in Urumqi, many private-sector job advertisements openly stated that only Han Chinese applicants would be considered; some state-owned enterprises went so far as to recruit Han Chinese from other parts of mainland China, rather than hire local ethnic minorities. [...] Severely curtailed employment prospects have given rise to an unusual phenomenon in Xinjiang: a craze for extracurricular foreign language training courses. Xinjiang’s ethnic minority university students are keener on studying foreign languages than students at top-tier universities such as Peking University and Tsinghua University, because these students feel that their only hope lies in finding work in international trade, tourism, or overseas. Even the privileged classes are not immune to employment difficulties: one child of a high-ranking Xinjiang Uighur government official graduated from a prestigious mainland university and spent a year searching fruitlessly for work. It was only after securing a personal letter of introduction from Wang Lequan [then Communist Party Secretary of Xinjiang] that the young graduate was finally able to secure a job.” (Tohti, 22 April 2015)

Hankiz Ekpar, researcher at the Sydney School of Public Health, compares available surveys on the unemployment of graduates in Xinjiang:

“In 2006, Wang conducted a survey among ethnic minority University graduates in Xinjiang, and found that the employment rate of those graduates was only 33.82 percent (Wang 2006, p. 35). Similarly, Chen’s (2011) survey among 969 participants of whom 72. percent were Uyghurs revealed the employment rate of minority ethnic graduates was

65.12 percent, whereas the employment rate of Han Chinese participants was 90 percent. However, individual study report results may differ from official government reports. In 2012, according to an official report, the overall employment rate for Xinjiang higher education graduates was 88.5 percent. The figure for minority graduates, of whom the majority were Uyghurs, was 80.5 percent (NBS Survey Office in Xinjiang 2013). Although it is noticeable that the employment rate for ethnic minority graduates is relatively high in the official report, it is still evident that there are disparities between ethnic minorities and Han Chinese. Given the high costs of higher education, it is not hard to understand why some Uyghurs in Sun's (2007) study, and as mentioned by Alimujiang (2013), would rather choose to enter the workforce earlier, or engage in illegal activities to fund their living expenses, than to pay for an education that may not guarantee them employment." (Ekpar, 2016)

High costs as a barrier to accessing education for Uyghurs in Xinjiang is also discussed in relation to education below the university level. Ekpar outlines the figures for Uyghurs dropping out of high school education in Xinjiang:

"Other studies have indicated that the high costs of schooling are responsible for the majority of drop-out cases among Uyghurs (Grose 2010, p. 99). In poorer, and Uyghur dominated, areas of Xinjiang such as Hotan, Kashgar, Aksu and Kizilsu Kirghiz Autonomous Prefecture, only 31 percent of junior high school graduates made the transition to secondary high school in 2010. This figure is much lower than the overall region level of Xinjiang which stood at 83 percent (Sina 2010; Xinjiang Statistical Information Net 2011). In Hotan prefecture where 96.4 percent of the population is ethnic Uyghurs, although the junior high school enrolment rate was 96.1 percent only 12.18 percent of junior high school graduates made it to the secondary high schools in 2009 (Hotan Information Network 2013; Xinjiang Investment Network 2010). It is obvious that Uyghur adolescents are lagging behind their Han counterparts in terms of education, and this can adversely affect their financial and social well-being, as well as their health outcomes." (Ekpar, 2016)

In the long-term study cited by Ekpar, Timothy A. Grose, assistant professor of China Studies at the Indiana based Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, writes:

"The financial costs of public schooling can partially explain the low percentages of Uyghurs obtaining higher education. Uyghurs are over-represented in farming and generally earn less money than Han [E. Hannum and Yu Xie, 1998]. Although new laws have been passed guaranteeing free tuition and the abolishment of 'miscellaneous fees' in schools, expenses still exist, and these fees prevent some Uyghur children from continuing education beyond the elementary and middle school level." (Grose, March 2010, p. 99)

Article 9 of the Education Law of the People's Republic of China states that "Citizens of the People's Republic of China shall have the right and duty to be educated. Citizens shall enjoy equal opportunity of education regardless of their ethnic community, race, sex, occupation, property or religious belief etc." (Education Law of the People's Republic of China, 18 March 1995, Article 9)

Article 56 of the same law stipulates with regard to areas inhabited by minority ethnic groups:

“The State Council and the local people’s governments at the county level or above shall establish specific funds for education to be used mainly for assisting outlying and poverty-stricken areas and areas inhabited by minority ethnic groups in enforcing compulsory education there.” (Education Law of the People’s Republic of China, 18 March 1995, Article 56).

The Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China, amended as of 29 June 2006, regulates the implementation of the compulsory education policy and stipulates:

“The State adopts a system of 9-year compulsory education. Compulsory education is education which is implemented uniformly by the State and shall be received by all school-age children and adolescents. It is a public welfare cause that shall be guaranteed by the State. No tuition or miscellaneous fee may be charged in the implementation of compulsory education. The State shall establish a guarantee mechanism for operating funds for compulsory education in order to ensure the implementation of the system of compulsory education” (Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China, amended as of 29 June 2006, Article 2)

Articles 6 and 18 of the same law state:

“The State Council and the local people’s governments at the county level and above shall reasonably allocate the educational resources, promote balanced development of compulsory education, improve the conditions of weak schools, take measures to ensure implementation of the compulsory education policy in rural areas and areas inhabited by ethnic minority groups, and guarantee that school-age children and adolescents from families with financial difficulties and disabled school-age children and adolescents receive compulsory education.

The State shall organize and encourage the economically developed areas to provide aid to the economically under-developed areas in the implementation of the compulsory education policy.” (Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China, amended as of 29 June 2006, Article 6)

“The administrative department of education of the State Council and the people’s governments of the provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities directly under the Central Government shall, where necessary, set up schools (classes) in economically developed areas so as to enroll school-age children and adolescents of ethnic minorities.” (Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China, amended as of 29 June 2006, Article 18)

Grose writes in his longterm study published in 2010 that “education levels of Uyghurs still lag behind Han Chinese”:

“Only 6.9 percent of the Uyghur population 15 and older (compared to 9.6% of Han living in western China), have graduated from high school. Moreover, the percentage of

Uyghurs over the age of 15 who have received a university education has only increased from 2.1 percent in 1990 to 3.1 percent in 2006.” (Grose, March 2010, p. 99)

Grose also refers to an unpublished report from 2006 which examined middle and high school drop-out rates in Kashgar’s 51st district in southern Xinjiang, claiming that financial difficulties are to be blamed for 68 percent of the region’s dropouts. (Grose, March 2010, p. 99)

China Daily, an English-language daily newspaper located in Beijing, wrote that tuition and miscellaneous fees have been abolished in rural schools in 2007:

“Tuition and miscellaneous fees in rural schools of the western region had already been scrapped from the spring semester of last year. The circular, issued by a national office of rural compulsory education, also pledged continuing to provide free textbooks and subsidies to students from poor families. Those for textbooks, workbooks and lodging. It said charges for auxiliary teaching materials, stationery, school uniforms, insurance, regular physical examinations, quarantine, drinking water and other school service charges are also waived from the coming spring semester. The cost will be jointly shouldered by the central government and local governments, the circular said.” (China Daily, 17 January 2007)

According to Grose, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) “has implemented several policies, which in theory, are aimed at improving minorities’ chances of receiving higher education”. He provides a summary for Chinese policies in this regard:

“First, the CCP has created a number of preferential policies (youhui zhengce) for minority students. These policies include lowering the standards on the college entrance exam (gao kao) minorities have to meet, adding ‘bonus points’ (jiafen zhengce) to minorities’ gao kao exams, and instituting a quota systems at universities in Xinjiang. [...] Second, the CCP has allocated several education subsidies to Xinjiang. A 2006 subsidy provided 10 billion RMB (1.3 billion USD) to rural areas in western China in order to build and improve elementary and middle schools. Finally, the CCP is actively encouraging Uyghur parents to send their children to Chinese (min kao han) schools and has established boarding schools for Uyghur students to study in China proper (nei di)—the Xinjiang Class.” (Grose, March 2010, pp. 100-101)

In January 2016, the China Internet Information Center, China.org.ch, a webportal authorized by the People’s Republic of China, also writes about recent policies to support “ethnic talent from Xinjiang”:

“More than 300 higher-learning institutes will increase enrollment of students from northwest China’s Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in government-sponsored education programs. At a conference organized by the Ministry of Education and State Ethnic Affairs Commission on Saturday, representatives of 323 institutions signed a deal to enroll 10,000 Xinjiang students annually from this year through 2020, up from 6,800 last year. The program is designed to improve the education level of ‘ethnic talent from Xinjiang,’ said Zhu Zhiwen, vice education minister at the meeting held in Urumqi, the regional capital. Chen Gaihu, vice director of the ethnic affairs commission, said the

program will help to protect the rights of ethnic groups in Xinjiang. Although there are plenty of primary and secondary schools in Xinjiang, the region lacks higher education resources. In December, the China University of Petroleum opened a campus in Karamay — the first higher-learning institute under the Ministry of Education to open in the region. To ensure access to education for the ethnic people in Xinjiang, the government initiated the ‘education coordination program’ in 1989 by encouraging universities to reserve seats. Over the past two decades, 323 higher-learning institutes have joined the program, and helped to educate more than 60,000 students, who now provide the backbone for the region’s political, economic and agricultural sectors.” (China.org.ch, 11 January 2016)

In his article from 2011, which has been revised in October 2013 and was published on ChinaChange.org in April 2015, Tohti argues, however, that severe underinvestment in basic education remains to be an issue:

“There is a vast north-south disparity in educational investment in Xinjiang. Even in southern Xinjiang, one finds stark ethnic inequalities in the allocation of educational resources, particularly in the area of secondary schools. Whether in terms of fiscal investment or number of schools, the proportion of educational resources allocated to Uighur students is far below what it should be, given their percentage as a proportion of the local population. Moreover, the high school enrollment rate in southern Xinjiang is extremely low, due to the critical lack of investment in basic education: in large Uighur population centers such as Kuqa country and Shache [Yarkant] county, there is only one high school in each county offering Uighur-language instruction. As a result, average educational levels in Uighur communities in southern Xinjiang are extremely low, causing workers to be inadequately equipped for careers in modern agriculture or industry. The surplus rural labor supply spills into the cities, where migrants face severely limited job prospects, forcing them further afield into the interior to look for better opportunities.” (Tohti, 22 April 2015)

In his April 2014 article in the China Daily newspaper, Cheng Jie from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences also stresses that local residents in Xinjiang lack the necessary skills to get jobs in the region:

“Xinjiang does not lack jobs, but local people, especially those who belong to a minority group, lack the necessary skills to get them; if the local government hopes to give them jobs it must resort to more measures than just this one. The key to maintaining long-term stability in Xinjiang lies in educating and training the local residents, so that they can be competitive in the labor market. The local government needs to consider investing more in public education, as well as providing quality vocational education to locals. There are many things, such as opening special classes in inland colleges to train young people from Xinjiang, which could promote their knowledge level and job abilities. That will not only make them more competitive in the labor market, but also help eradicate the prejudice or preconceived idea about minorities from Xinjiang. Social organizations such as Save the Children have also introduced a series of programs to educate them, and local government might learn from their experiences.” (Cheng, 1 April 2014)



In March 2015, Radio Free Asia's Uyghur Service quotes a Uyghur farmer from Hotan (Hetian) in southwestern Xinjiang, responding to an interview with Aizezi Musa, a representative from Xinjiang who praised China's policies in Xinjiang on national media:

"Aizezi Musa lied and talked against the millions of Uyghurs for his own benefit,' a Uyghur farmer from Hotan, who declined to be named, told RFA's Uyghur Service, responding to comments the official made. [...] The farmer also denounced Musa's comments about bonus points awarded to ethnic minority students on the National College Entrance Examination, which has given some Xinjiang students access to the same education as that of their counterparts in China's developed eastern coastal areas. He called the policy 'poisonous.' 'If they want to help Uyghurs and want to provide high-quality education, why don't they bring that education to Uyghurs and build schools here?,' he asked. 'Why do they have to separate young kids from their families and their culture at young age? The purpose of the Chinese government is to assimilate Uyghurs and destroy our culture and religion by changing our kids.'" (RFA, 16 March 2015)

Tohti explains that within the Uyghur community "[s]uspicious abound that the government is using administrative means to exterminate Uighur culture and accelerate ethnic and cultural assimilation" (Tohti, 23 April 2015). This fear of cultural assimilations seems to be especially debated in regard to language:

"Besides unemployment, the issue that provokes the most intense reaction within Xinjiang's Uighur community is the issue of bilingual education. In practice, 'bilingual education' in Xinjiang has essentially become 'monolingual education' (i.e. Mandarin-only education.) Within the Uighur community, there is a widespread belief that the government intends to establish an educational system based on written Chinese and rooted in the idea of 'one language, one origin.' [...] In practice, the greatest problem with bilingual education in Xinjiang is that it produces a large number of students who are proficient in neither their mother tongues nor in Mandarin. This has led to declining educational standards and difficulties for ethnical students, who dread attending school, to master subjects. The bilingual education system in Xinjiang mandates that physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics and other subjects be taught in Mandarin Chinese, which means that Uighur and other ethnic minority students are often unable to understand what they are being taught. This policy is responsible, to a large extent, for the steady increase in dropout rates for Uighur and other ethnic minority students. [...] In fact, nearly all Uighur families want their children to receive a better-quality education in Mandarin Chinese, and they feel that genuine 'bilingual education' has come too late. Yet at the same time, the prevailing view and mainstream opinion in Uighur communities is that 'Bilingual education should not come at the expense of one's mother tongue.' Mandarin's special status as China's lingua franca should not make it an excuse for linguistic discrimination or forced linguistic assimilation." (Tohti, 23 April 2015)

With regard to language education, Grose writes that "[b]esides the economic difficulties state-sponsored schooling poses for some Uyghur families, policies of 'bilingual' education present even more obstacles" (Grose, March 2010, p. 99). Citing a study from 2006, he states:

“Despite the recent emphasis on teaching Chinese, most Uyghurs remain illiterate in Chinese. Recent statistics report that 82% of Uyghurs over 15 are unable to read Chinese and 10.8% can ‘read Chinese with difficulty’. [...] Even those Uyghurs more accepting of the current Chinese language dominated education system in Xinjiang are not guaranteed employment that provides lucrative salaries and benefits.” (Grose, March 2010, p. 100)

The Education Law of the People’s Republic of China stipulates that the state “shall help all ethnic minority regions develop educational undertakings in light of the characteristics and requirements of different ethnic minority groups” (Education Law of the People’s Republic of China, 18 March 1995, Article 10). Article 12 of the same law states:

“The Chinese language, both oral and written, shall be the basic oral and written language for education in schools and other educational institutions. Schools or other educational institutions which mainly consist of students from ethnic minority groups may use in education the language of the respective ethnic community or the native language commonly adopted in that region. Schools and other educational institutions shall in their educational activities popularize the nationally common spoken Chinese and the standard written characters.” (Education Law of the People’s Republic of China, 18 March 1995, Article 12)

In December 2014, Reuters wrote the following account on bilingual education in Xinjiang:

“Bilingual education in China’s unruly far western region of Xinjiang will help to preserve stability and to develop the area, a senior Communist Party official said on Wednesday, stressing the importance of a controversial policy. [...] Bilingual education has been promoted in recent years to help give ethnic minorities, especially in sensitive places like Xinjiang, better job opportunities, with a lack of fluency in China’s official tongue of Mandarin seen holding back development. But it has been opposed by many Uighurs, who worry that their own Turkic language, which is written in an Arabic-based script, is being marginalized. [...] In recognition of the economic roots of some of the violence in Xinjiang, where better paying jobs often go to Mandarin-speaking migrants from other parts of China, the government has poured money in, notably in the heavily Uighur southern part of Xinjiang.” (Reuters, 10 December 2014)

In January 2014, the Economist, a weekly newspaper based in London, wrote a report on challenges as well as advantages of bilingual education in Xinjiang:

“Educating young Uighurs in Mandarin may one day help them find work—but it is also a means by which the government hopes to subdue Xinjiang and its many inhabitants who chafe at rule from Beijing. [...] Officials are beginning to recognise that there is a social problem, as well as a security-related one. There is a renewed focus on breaking down ethnic barriers and promoting a shared national identity. Mandarin-teaching for Uighurs is seen as a tool to achieve these goals. Since 2011 officials in the region have been promoting what they call ‘bilingual education’. By this they mean that most instruction is to be in Mandarin. Ever more schools are moving towards using Chinese only, with the exception of a few hours of classes each week in Uighur literature. President Xi Jinping emphasises this policy as a way to fight terrorism. Last year he described better

education as 'essential' to the region's long-term stability. [...] The government's desire to boost Mandarin-speaking ability is reasonable: few Uighurs speak fluent, or even passable, Chinese. Mastering the language should open up opportunities for Uighur children and improve their job prospects (in 2010, 83% of all Uighurs were farmers). Bringing Han and Uighur children into the same classroom, as some urban schools are at last trying to do, should help too. [...] Around two-thirds of minority children now receive Mandarin-language instruction. But educational quality is suffering. Not enough Uighurs speak sufficient Mandarin to teach in it; those who do want better-paid jobs than teaching. It is hard to attract Han teachers to a poor, volatile region. The government is pumping money into the recruitment effort, but it says Xinjiang still needs 30,000 more teachers who can speak both Mandarin and a local language. Uighur-speaking parents can rarely help their children with school work and many pupils have no chance to practise the Mandarin they acquire. Even in a model school like Mingde, staff admit that children speak only Uighur outside class. Many six-year-olds cannot understand basic questions in Chinese. Other skills suffer, too: children typically learn English via Mandarin, for example, even though English and Uighur—unlike Chinese—both use alphabetical scripts." (The Economist, 27 January 2015)

#### **4.8 Harassment, threats and discrimination**

As Xinhua news agency reports in January 2016, a local law (regulation) designed to "encourage ethnic solidarity and harmony" in Xinjiang has been introduced. The law makes "promoting ethnic unity" one of the key grounds on which officials' performance is assessed and "explicitly bans differentiated treatment when providing public services". Xinhua states that the regulation contains the following provision:

"Public places such as hotels, restaurants, train and bus stations, airports and markets shall provide equal treatment of all ethnic groups. Region, nationality, religious belief or folk customs shall not be used as reasons to discriminate or refuse to provide service in these venues," the regulation said. People committing such offences will be fined as much as 10,000 yuan (1,560 U.S. dollars) and may be subject to further prosecution, it said. [...]

The regulations, which encompass 60 provisions, encourages ethnic and social unity in a most extensive way, legislators said. For example, it stipulates the role of parents or other guardians in nurturing and raising the awareness of ethnic solidarity and harmony among children. The law drafting began in early 2015. Legislators held more than 170 consultations with over 500 members of the public, said Neyim Yasin, chairman of the standing committee of the regional people's congress." (Xinhua, 15 January 2016)

Referring to the July 2014 violence in Shache county, a September 2014 Washington Post article states that in interviews with locals in the region, "a picture of constant harassment across Xinjiang emerges". One Uyghur resident is quoted as saying that "the police are everywhere", while another indicated that his ID card had been checked so many times that "the magnetic strip is not working any more". (Washington Post, 19 September 2014)

An August 2014 article of the Canadian The Globe and Mail newspaper reports about surveillance in Xinjiang:

“Across the street from one mosque in Urumqi, a pack of heavily armed soldiers glares out from a thick metal cage with a sign warning people to stay away. At another mosque, soldiers surround a hulking armoured personnel carrier pointed directly at a busy entrance; a steady strobe of flashes from a camera mounted above the street captures the licence plates of each passing car. As well, rewards have been offered for residents who ‘gather intelligence’ on neighbours doing something considered suspect: underground preaching, wearing ‘bizarre dress,’ ‘engagement in feudal superstitions.’ [...]

In big cities, new airport-style security checks for bus travel are forcing even grandmothers to use taxis when shopping – milk cartons are over the limit for liquids. The entrance to one Uighur-owned hotel is covered by eight cameras, capturing every possible approach.” (The Globe and Mail, 15 August 2014)

A January 2016 article of the New York Times (NYT) reports with reference to Kashgar:

“As heavily armed soldiers rummage through car trunks and examine ID cards, ethnic Uighur motorists and their passengers are sometimes asked to hand over their cellphones so that the police can search them for content or software deemed a threat to public security. In addition to jihadist videos, the police are on the lookout for Skype and WhatsApp, apps popular with those who communicate with friends and relatives outside China, and for software that allows users to access blocked websites.” (NYT, 2 January 2016)

An RFA article of May 2015 notes that members of the Uyghur minority have been “placed on a security blacklist when they seek hotel rooms in major Chinese cities, with staff informing local police stations when they try to check in”. An employee at a Beijing hotel is cited as saying that “Uyghurs can book rooms, but the police will pay a visit”, while an employee at a Shanghai hotel said that “[t]he details will get passed straight through to the police computer network”. As an employee at a Guangzhou hotel is quoted as confirming that there is a blacklist of persons banned from booking hotel rooms, while non-blacklisted Uyghurs would still be reported to the local police station as they checked in. Meanwhile, the article states that “a Han Chinese resident of Urumqi surnamed Fang said the procedure is the same for Han Chinese residents of Xinjiang”. (RFA, 14 May 2015)

Several sources mention the harassment of family members of Uyghur activists. In a March 2015 article, the Huffington Post reports the following:

“Family harassment is a common tactic employed by Chinese authorities to silence Uyghurs. Earlier this month, the Uyghur Human Rights Project mailed a petition with over 500 signatures to President Xi Jinping urging him to release a list of Uyghur political prisoners. [...]

One prisoner in the petition, Ablikim Abdureyim, highlights with devastating poignancy how China punishes outspoken Uyghurs’ families. Ablikim was sentenced to nine years in prison in 2006 after his mother, Uyghur democracy leader Rebiya Kadeer was elected president of the Uyghur American Association and the World Uyghur Congress. He was tortured in prison, and UHRP selected his case to illustrate the endemic nature of torture

facing Uyghur prisoners. Ablikim's brother Alim, imprisoned for seven years, was also tortured. In total, more than 30 of Ms. Kadeer's relatives in China including her children and grandchildren have been targeted, evicted from their homes, and in some cases forced to speak out against her on public television.

A pattern apparent in these cases is the application of pressure on families in China to convince overseas Uyghurs to cease raising awareness of human rights abuses in China, an increasingly common tactic in 2014. In addition to Hoshur's family, authorities have singled out the family of Ilshat Hassan, an activist who serves on the board of the Uyghur American Association and frequently writes for the Mandarin-language Chinese democracy site boxun.com. In August, Hassan's sister was detained. A similar fate met the younger brother of Australian activist Ghopur, who was sentenced to 10 years. Overseas Uyghurs, free to analyze and question Chinese policies, pose a major threat to state media control." (Huffington Post, 28 March 2015)

In September 2014, RFA also refers to harassment of relatives of an activist living in exile:

"A U.S.-based Uyghur activist says authorities in his homeland in northwest China's Xinjiang region have detained his sister and harassed other family members in retaliation for his campaign to protect the rights of the Uyghur ethnic minority group. Ilshat Hesén, vice president of the Uyghur American Association, said that local authorities detained Ilnur Hesén on Aug. 16 at her home in Kuytun county in the Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture in northernmost Xinjiang." (RFA, 12 September 2014)

For further information could be found relating to harassment, threats and discrimination against Uyghurs, please refer to other sections of this compilation, including sections 3.1.1 ("General security situation"), 4.2 ("Right to access information"), 4.5 ("Freedom of Religion") and 4.9 ("Torture and ill-treatment").

#### **4.9 Torture and ill-treatment**

In March 2012, the National People's Congress (NPC) adopted an amendment to the country's 1979 Criminal Procedure Law (CPL). The amended CPL, which became effective in January 2013 (CECC, 9 October 2014, p. 84), contains the following provisions in its Articles 50, 51 and 54:

"Article 50: Judges, procuratorial personnel and investigators shall adhere to statutory procedures when gathering and obtaining evidence that may prove whether criminal suspects or defendants are guilty or innocent, or whether cases involve serious criminal offenses or not. They are strictly prohibited from extorting confessions by torture, collecting evidence through threats, enticement, deception or other unlawful means, or forcing anyone to provide evidence proving his/her own guilt. They shall ensure that all citizens who are involved in a case or who have information about the circumstances of a case can furnish all available evidence in an objective manner and, except under special circumstances, may ask such citizens to provide assistance in investigation. [...]

Article 51: The public security organ's requests for approval of arrest, the People's Procuratorate's bills of prosecution and the People's Court's written judgments must be

faithful to the facts. The responsibility of anyone who intentionally conceals the facts shall be investigated. [...]

Article 54: Confessions extorted from a criminal suspect or defendant by illegal means such as torture, testimony of witnesses and statements of victims collected by violent means, threat or other unlawful means shall be excluded. Physical evidence or documentary evidence that is not collected according to statutory procedures and is therefore likely to materially damage judicial justice shall be subject to correction or reasonable explanations, and shall be excluded if correction or reasonable explanations are not made.” (CPL, 1 January 2013, Articles 50, 51 and 54)

The October 2014 annual report of the US Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC), which covers the period from autumn 2013 to autumn 2014, notes on the implementation of the CPL’s provisions requiring courts to exclude illegally obtained evidence:

“[I]n practice, [...] the implementation of the exclusionary rule has thus far had little success. In March 2014, the Beijing Evening News reported prominent Beijing-based criminal law professor Chen Guangzhong as stating that even if evidence is occasionally excluded under the rule, it is usually not a key piece of evidence, and in the end, its exclusion has no impact on the verdict or sentence in the case. In addition, over 40 percent of the lawyers in the Shangquan survey indicated that although they had applied to a court to exclude illegally obtained evidence, the courts failed to respond to their applications. In April 2014, law professor Eva Pils remarked that Chinese criminal defense lawyers had told her ‘it’s extremely difficult to use the [exclusionary] rule in trial processes.’” (CECC, 9 October 2014, p. 86)

The October 2015 annual report of the CECC, which covers the period from autumn 2014 to autumn 2015, indicates that “[t]he Chinese government for years has acknowledged the problem of wrongful convictions, including the use of torture to extract confessions.” The report notes that in March 2015, the head of the Supreme People’s Court (SPC) “called on courts to improve practices” with regard to wrongful convictions. Moreover, it is noted that in April 2015, “the SPP [Supreme People’s Procuratorate] announced that it was launching a special campaign to rectify ‘miscarriages of justice’.” (CECC, 8 October 2015, pp. 106-107)

The April 2016 USDOS *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2015*, which covers the year 2015, states that “prison authorities singled out political and religious dissidents for particularly harsh treatment”:

“Numerous former prisoners and detainees reported they were beaten, subjected to electric shock, forced to sit on stools for hours on end, deprived of sleep, and otherwise subjected to physical and psychological abuse. Although ordinary prisoners were abused, prison authorities reportedly singled out political and religious dissidents for particularly harsh treatment. In some instances close relatives of dissidents also were singled out for abuse.” (USDOS, 13 April 2016, section 1c)

Joseph Grieboski, a US social entrepreneur and founder and chairman of the Board of Directors of the Washington, D.C.-based non-profit Institute on Religion and Public Policy, writes in a September 2014 journal article:

“The arbitrary arrest, torture, and ‘disappearance’ of those considered ‘separatists’ is widely perpetrated against Uyghurs inhabiting China’s northern Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, and overt fear has infused the nationwide population.” (Grieboski, 24 September 2014)

As the Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD) notes in February 2015, “a dozen or so prisoners” including Ilham Tohti, and several detainees [...] are known to be subjected to mistreatment and are in very poor health (CHRD, 17 February 2015).

The June 2015 US Department of State (USDOS) Country Report on Human Rights Practices, which covers the year 2014, cites a lawyer of imprisoned Uyghur economist Ilham Tohti as reporting that “Tohti was shackled in chains for 20 days in detention, denied food for up to 10 days, and subjected to physical abuse from other inmates” (USDOS, 25 June 2015, section 2a).

In November 2014, RFA reported about the following case:

“An ethnic minority Muslim Uyghur farmer serving a 10-year sentence for ‘illegal religious activities’ has died in jail in western China’s Xinjiang region amid concerns of torture, his brother said. Yakob Idris, who died on Sept. 23, had been in good health when he was sentenced at a mass trial held at a sports field in Ghulja city [Yining in Chinese] of Kepekyuzi town in western China’s Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in May. But authorities transferred Idris, who was aged 56, to several prisons in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang, where he eventually died at the No. 4 jail, his younger brother Sadik Idris, told RFA’s Uyghur Service.” (RFA, 5 November 2014)

Sources refer to reports of detention and torture of returned Uyghur asylum-seekers (USDOS, 14 October 2015, section 2).

No further information could be found on torture and ill-treatment of Uyghurs.

#### **4.10 Death penalty**

A June 2014 report of the state-run Xinhua news agency states that 13 people were executed in the XUAR for planning “terrorist attacks” and “kill[ing] police officers, government officials and civilians”, amongst others. Referring to local courts in the Aksu, Turpan and Hotan prefectures, the report states that those executed had been “involved in seven cases” and “convicted of organizing, leading and participating in terrorist groups; murder; arson; theft; and illegal manufacture, storage and transportation of explosives”. As Xinhua states, “[a]ll death penalties have been approved by the Supreme People’s Court “. (Xinhua, 16 June 2014)

Another June 2014 Xinhua report states that the Urumqi Intermediate People’s Court delivered a first-instance verdict sentencing three people to death over the October 2013 attack near Beijing’s Tian’anmen Square. They were convicted of “organizing and leading a

terrorist group and endangering public security with dangerous methods". The report provides the following details:

"Gulnar Tuhtiniyaz and Bujanat Abdukadir were sentenced to life in jail and 20 years in prison respectively for the crimes of participating in a terrorist group and endangering public security with dangerous methods. Three others, Tohti Mehmat, Tursunjan Abliz and Abla Niyaz, would be jailed for ten to five years for participating in a terrorist group, said the court." (Xinhua, 16 June 2014)

In August 2014, Reuters news agency reports with reference to the Xinhua news agency:

"China has executed eight people for 'terrorist' attacks in its restive far western region of Xinjiang, including three who 'masterminded' a dramatic car crash in the capital's Tiananmen Square in 2013, state media said. [...]"

Three of the executed group 'masterminded' the October 2013 attack in the heart of the Chinese capital, official news agency Xinhua said late on Saturday. [...]"

The other executions, carried out in recent days, were punishment for crimes ranging from setting up a terrorist outfit and illegally making explosives to attacking police officers and killing government officials, Xinhua said." (Reuters, 24 August 2014)

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) states in its March 2015 *Human Rights and Democracy Report 2014*, which covers the year 2014:

"The Chinese government treats death penalty figures as a state secret. [...] High-profile media coverage of miscarriages of justice and greater scrutiny by the Chinese judiciary may be reducing the overall number of people executed. However, many Uyghurs were sentenced to death in expedited trials as part of a security crackdown." (FCO, 12 March 2015)

A January 2016 article of the NYT reports that the "strike hard special operation" that began after the killing of 43 people in the 2014 Urumqi attacks has resulted in dismantling "nearly 200 terrorist groups" and "the execution of at least 49 people". (NYT, 2 January 2016)

Amnesty International (AI) indicates in its March 2015 report on death sentences and executions that took place during 2014:

"China made use of the death penalty as a tool in the 'Strike Hard' campaign, which the authorities characterized as a response to terrorism and violent crime in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. Three people were sentenced to death in a mass sentencing rally involving 55 people convicted of terrorism, separatism and murder. Between June and August, 21 people were executed in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region in relation to separate terrorist attacks." (AI, 1 April 2015, p. 11)

The same source states in its April 2016 report on death sentences and executions, which covers the year 2015:

"Amnesty International believed that the death penalty continued to be used against members of the Uighur minority as part of China's 'Strike Hard' campaign, targeting



‘violent terrorism and religious extremism’. The organization did not receive reports of executions and death sentences in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region during 2015. However, three people from the Uighur minority were executed in Yunnan province on 24 March. They had been convicted of murder and leading a ‘terrorist’ organization for their alleged association with five people involved in a 2014 attack at the Kunming train station that resulted in the death of 31 people.” (AI, 6 April 2016, p. 28)

#### 4.11 Due process and access to justice

Articles 20, 37 and 83 of the amended Criminal Procedure Law (CPL) of the People’s Republic of China, which was adopted in March 2012 and became effective in January 2013, contains the following provisions relating to persons accused of “endangering State security” or “terrorist activities”:

“Article 20 Intermediate people’s courts shall have the jurisdiction as courts of first instance over the following criminal cases: (1) Cases endangering State security or involving terrorist activities; and (2) Cases of crimes punishable by life imprisonment or capital punishment. [...]

Article 37 Defense lawyers may have meeting and correspondence with criminal suspects or defendants who are under detention. Other defenders, subject to the permission of people’s courts and people’s procuratorates, may also meet and correspond with criminal suspects or defendants who are under detention. [...] During the investigation period for crimes endangering State security, involving terrorist activities or involving significant amount of bribes, defense lawyers shall obtain the approval of investigating organs before they meet with the criminal suspects. The investigating organs shall inform the detention houses of information relating to the aforesaid cases in advance. [...]

Article 83 When detaining a person, a public security organ must produce a detention warrant. After being taken into custody, a detainee shall be immediately transferred to a detention house for detention within 24 hours. The family of the detainee shall be notified of the detention within 24 hours after the detention, unless the notification cannot be processed or where the detainee is involved in crimes endangering State security or crimes of terrorist activities, and such notification may hinder the investigation. The family of the detainee shall be notified of relevant information immediately after the circumstances impeding investigation has been eliminated.” (CPL, 1 January 2013, Articles 20, 37 and 83)

Referring to the situation in China in general, the October 2015 annual report of the US Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) states that “lawyers continued to face substantial impediments when trying to play a meaningful role in criminal cases” (CECC, 8 October 2015, p. 106). The same source also notes that “[n]umerous reports have surfaced over the past decade of innocent people convicted in China based on faulty evidence” and that “[t]he Chinese government for years has acknowledged the problem of wrongful convictions, including the use of torture to extract confessions.” (CECC, 8 October 2015, p. 106)

The April 2016 USDOS *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2015*, which covers developments of 2015, states that while “[s]ome criminal defense attorneys stated that under the 2013 revised criminal procedure law, their ability to meet with clients improved significantly [,] [...] [t]his generally did not apply to cases considered politically sensitive” (USDOS, 13 April 2016, section 1d).

The June 2015 USDOS *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2015*, which covers 2014, provides the following details about the trial of the Uyghur academic Ilham Tohti:

“On September 23 [2014], the Urumqi People’s Intermediate Court in a closed trial sentenced Uyghur economist and professor Ilham Tohti to life imprisonment after finding him guilty of advocating ‘separatism.’ The government also seized his life savings of RMB 850,000 (\$140,000) and other assets. On November 21, the Urumqi High Court rejected Tohti’s request for an appeal and upheld his life sentence. [...] Tohti’s legal team was refused access to trial evidence, not permitted to cross-examine witnesses, and prevented from meeting their client for the first six months of his detention.” (USDOS, 25 June 2015, section 2a)

A September 2014 Human Rights Watch (HRW) press release notes on the trial of Tohti:

“Tohti’s case has already been marked by ill-treatment in detention and procedural violations. He was denied access to his lawyers for over five months, from January to June. Under China’s Criminal Procedural Law, suspects charged with terrorism, major corruption, and state security charges can be denied access to counsel, but this provision violates the right to a fair trial. [...]”

Tohti’s lawyers have disputed the jurisdiction over the case by the Urumqi court since Tohti has lived and worked in Beijing for years. [...]

Political detainees generally have few due process rights in China, but procedural standards are even lower in political trials in Xinjiang involving Uyghurs.” (HRW, 15 September 2014)

The US Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) states in its October 2014 annual report:

“In ‘politically sensitive’ cases, public security officials routinely prevented lawyers from meeting with detained clients. Uyghur scholar Ilham Tohti was held incommunicado in an unknown location from January 15, 2014, until late June when his lawyers, Li Fangping and Wang Yu, were finally permitted to meet with him. Moreover, in further contravention of the CPL, Urumqi procuratorial officials indicted Tohti without first informing his lawyers and listening to their opinions.” (CECC, 9 October 2014, p. 85)

The USDOS mentions that officials “approved expedited judicial procedures and in some cases mass trials for Uyghur terrorism suspects in the XUAR” (USDOS, 13 April 2016, Executive Summary).

A November 2014 Reuters article states that “[m]ass public sentencings have become common in Xinjiang, with state television often showing them taking place in packed outdoor auditoriums”. The article quotes human rights groups as criticizing such mass trials and sentencings as violations of the right to due process. (Reuters, 11 November 2014)

No further information could be found on this issue.

#### **4.12 Situation of women and children**

The website [womenofchina.cn](http://womenofchina.cn), which is sponsored by the All-China Women’s Federation (ACWF), an organization representing women’s interests in the People’s Republic of China with close links to the Chinese government, provides the following update on the legal situation of women in China in March 2016:

“With the aim to further improve women’s welfare and rights, China has amended laws and regulations to accelerate gender equality and the overall development of women in the country. As China’s first law against domestic violence came into effect earlier this March, deputies attending the National People’s Congress (NPC) annual session said the law would further guarantee women’s rights. Sun Xiaomei, an NPC deputy who has long advocated for the law, applauds the legislation, saying that ‘women are the highest-risk group facing domestic violence. The law will better protect their rights.’ Riyangul Almire, a female deputy from the rural area of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, said that local women’s federations have been promoting the marriage law and anti-domestic violence law through various channels in different languages. ‘With the protection of the law, women in rural areas feel safer than before,’ she added. As early as 1954, China’s constitution officially included women’s rights among the fundamental rights of citizens. Later amendments further stipulated protection of women’s rights. A specific law on women’s rights protection was also introduced. The constitution and related laws have ensured the independent and inviolable status of women, granting them the same freedom and dignity that men enjoy. China’s practice has proved that the promotion of women’s participation in social and economic activities could effectively improve their social status and economic vitality. Women’s participation in administration and discussion of state affairs is an important index to measure a country’s degree of humanity. Since the establishment of the people’s congress system, the percentage of female deputies has been increasing. According to released statistics, 23.4 percent of the deputies are female in this year’s session. Their occupations include diplomats, Olympic champions, grassroots school principals, as well as farmers.” (ACWF, 17 March 2016)

The the Qatar-based TV news network Al Jazeera reported about the introduction of the new law against domestic violence in March 2016, referring to estimates that nearly 25 percent of married women in China have experienced domestic violence but points out that “the real figure is probably much higher, because reporting abuse is still rare - especially in the countryside” (Al Jazeera, 1 March 2016). Human Rights Watch (HRW) refers to the law as “a step in the right direction” but claims that “cases of domestic violence in which local authorities fail to respond appropriately continue to occur with worrying regularity” (HRW, 27. January 2016). In January 2016, Freedom House wrote the following on the introduction of the law:

“Domestic violence affects one-quarter of Chinese women, according to official figures. In December 2015, the National People’s Congress adopted the country’s first law designed to combat domestic violence. The final version included psychological in addition to physical violence, but critics noted that sexual violence was not explicitly addressed, and that the law’s application to relationships outside marriage, including same-sex couples, remained unclear. Several laws bar gender discrimination in the workplace, and gender equality has reportedly improved over the past decade, but bias remains widespread, including in job recruitment and college admissions. Women remain severely underrepresented in important CCP and government positions.” (Freedom House, 27 January 2016)

Xiaobing Li, professor and chair of the Department of History and Geography and director of the Western Pacific Institute at the University of Central Oklahoma, and Patrick F. Shan, associate professor of history at Grand Valley State University, write in 2015 that Uyghur women “have some obvious disadvantages and remain backward in their employment, education, welfare, and retirement”, and their political position and demands “are not clearly reflected in elections and policy debates due to the traditions they have inherited. Minority women fare even worse than minority men.” (Li/Shan, 2015, pp. xxi-xxii).

In 2014, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) states in its concluding observations on the combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of China that “the Committee is concerned about reports that ethnic and religious minority women, such as Tibetans and Uighurs, and women with disabilities continue to experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination”. CEDAW is “particularly concerned that ethnic and religious minority women continue to have limited access to health, education and employment” (CEDAW, 14 November 2014). CEDAW explicitly refers to Uyghur women with regard to education, providing the following statement:

“The Committee welcomes the progress made by the State party in improving the enrolment of girls in school, which is reducing the illiteracy rate among adult women, the formulation of the proposals on promoting the development of women’s talents in science and technology in 2011 and the clear goals set out in the Programme for the Development of Chinese Women (2011-2020). However, the Committee is concerned about the segregation of majors at university programmes by sex and the lower minimum entrance exam score required in certain subjects, specifically for boys, at some colleges in the State party. The Committee is also concerned about the limited access to education for women and girls with intellectual disabilities and ethnic and religious minority women and girls, such as Tibetans and Uighurs. The Committee is further concerned about the limited access to education and the high school drop-out rate of girls whose parents migrate to urban areas (the so-called children ‘left behind’).” (CEDAW, 14 November 2014)

CEDAW states the following with regard to political participation of women:

“The Committee notes the progress made by the State party in promoting the participation of women in political and public life and the adoption of the Programme for

the Development of Chinese Women (2011-2020), which sets out targets for the participation of women in decision-making bodies at all levels and makes reference to the right of ethnic minorities to participate in the management of State affairs. The Committee also welcomes the amendment of the Organic Law of the Villagers' Committees, which stipulates that there shall be women members in the villagers' committees and that more than one third of the representatives to the villagers' representatives' conference shall be women. However, the Committee remains concerned about the continued underrepresentation of women and the slow progress made during the reporting period to increase representation at the legislative, ministerial and provincial levels. The Committee is also concerned that ethnic and religious minority women, such as Tibetans and Uighurs, and rural and internal migrant women are also underrepresented in decision-making positions. The Committee is deeply concerned about reports that women who stand for election as independent candidates are subjected to abuse and violence." (CEDAW, 14 November 2014)

With regard to employment of women in Xinjiang, the UN Human Rights Council's (HRC) Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice expressed concerns about the implications of labour transfer programmes for Uyghur women in Xinjiang after conducting a mission to China in December 2013:

"The Group is also concerned at reports of unmarried Uighur women as young as 16 being forced to participate in a labour transfer programme from the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region to urban factories in eastern China, enduring appalling working conditions, which has led to some families in the region arranging the marriages of their daughters to older men in order to escape transfer to the factories." (HRC, 12 June 2014, p. 17)

The World Uyghur Congress (WUC), a federation of exile groups speaking on behalf of Uyghur people states in an Alternative Report for the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 2013, referring to the labour transfer programme for young Uyghur women:

"Wages are far less than promised, if paid at all, with further problems including sub-standard accommodation, food and sanitary conditions. No assistance is given to those who express a desire to return to XUAR, and many are therefore living and working in eastern provinces against their will and of their families', unable to financially afford to return home" (WUC, March 2013, p.11).

The London-based Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC), which describes itself as an independent, not-for-profit, campaign, research and advocacy organization provides the following details on the labour transfer programme in 2008:

"Although exact figures of this programme are difficult to ascertain, human rights reports substantiated by The People's Republic of China (PRC) statistics indicate the transfer of several thousand young women in selected counties of Eastern Turkistan, thus reflecting the possibility of a massive-scale government-endorsed programme. Reportedly, PRC statistics indicate that amongst the some 100,000 people from East Turkistan working in the eastern urban areas of China during 2007, a significant portion of these workers were

young women [...]. Upon arrival to eastern coastal cities such as Zhejiang, Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai and Shandong, the women are met with a far different reality than that described to them and their parents.” (IHRC, 6 March 2008)

In a 2010 interview with the Inter Press Service (IPS), Rebiya Kadeer, president of the World Uyghur Congress, claims the following:

“Hundreds of thousands of young Uyghur women are forcefully transferred from rural Uyghur families to factories in eastern Chinese provinces to work as cheap labourers. They are promised high pay but in the end they are locked up in factory compounds where they have to work up to 14 hours a day with little or no pay. Many women are deprived of their right to keep in touch with their families, and they do not have the right to return to their families. If they flee from the factories and return to their hometowns they are arrested and severely punished.” (IPS, 20 October 2010)

The US Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) writes in its 2008 report that “while the Chinese government continues to fill local jobs in the XUAR with migrant labor, it also maintains programs that send young ethnic minorities to work in factories in China’s interior under conditions reported to be abusive” (CECC, 31 October 2008, p. 179). The CECC’s current annual report 2015 does, however, not contain any information on this programme (CECC, 8 October 2015).

In March 2016, All-China Women’s Federation (ACWF) quoted a political adviser from Xinjiang who calls for the implementation of Special Regulations on the Labour Protection of Female Workers:

“Female political advisers meeting in Beijing have called on leaders to encourage better adoption of the rules and further boost regulations of the four-year-old Special Regulations on the Labor Protection of Female Workers in China. The comments were made by advisers in the capital at the ongoing session of China’s top consultative body, ahead of International Women’s Day (March 8). Pan Xiaoyan, a political adviser from northwest China’s Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, said that it is important for enterprises to realize that effectively implementing the Special Regulations is directly related to the health of female employees and the next generation. ‘Companies need to understand that it is the duty of society,’ said Pan.” (ACWF, 8 March 2016)

The Special Regulations on the Labor Protection of Female Workers in China are accessible via the following link:

- Special Rules on the Labor Protection of Female Employees (2012), 28 April 2012 (available at the website of All-China Federation of Trade Unions)  
<http://en.acftu.org/28616/201408/26/140826131330762.shtml>

The standard regulations regarding the protection of employed women in China can be accessed at:

- Regulations Concerning The Labor Protection Of Female Staff And Workers, 21 July 1988 (available at the website of the Ministry Of Commerce of the People’s Republic Of China) <http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/aarticle/lawsdata/chineselaw/200211/20021100050536.html>

With regard to children, child labour has reportedly been an issue in Xinjiang. The US Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) writes in its *Annual Report 2015* that “child labor continues to be a problem in China despite the existence of legal measures prohibiting its practice” (CECC, 8 October 2015, p. 86). The CECC provides the following overview over the Chinese legal framework with regard to child labour and its implementation:

“As a member of the International Labour Organization (ILO), China has ratified the two core conventions on the elimination of child labor. The PRC Labor Law and related legislation also prohibit the employment of minors under 16, and national legal provisions prohibiting child labor stipulate fines and other punishments for employing children. Systemic problems in implementation and enforcement of the law, however, have hindered the effects of these legal measures. Collusion between private businesses and local authorities reportedly continues to facilitate child labor. In addition, a reported lack of government resources has hindered monitoring and oversight in the workplace.” (CECC, 8 October 2015, p. 86)

The US Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB), which is part of the United States Department of Labor, writes in its most recent list of products produced by forced or indentured child labor from December 2014 that there are reports of children being forced to pick cotton in Xinjiang schools:

“Reports from an NGO and the U.S. Government indicate that children in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region and in Gansu province are mobilized through schools and required by provincial regulations to work during the autumn harvest. According to the most recently available estimates, between 40,000 and 1 million students are mobilized annually for the harvest, beginning as early as the third grade. Most children are paid little if at all, after deductions for meals, transportation, and payments to the school. These students are required to pick daily quotas of cotton or pay fines, and performance in the cotton harvest is assessed for the students’ promotion to higher grade levels.” (ILAB, 1 December 2014, p. 7)

Although a number of sources report about school children harvesting cotton in Xinjiang, the ILAB report from 2014 cited above provides the most recent reference to this practice. Child Rights International Network (CRIN), a global research, policy and advocacy organization, writes about forced labour in work–study programmes in 2013. It summarizes individual observations and direct requests issued by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Committee of Experts related to child labour conventions:

“Under these programmes, pupils are obliged to work to ‘learn a skill’, but often they perform regular work in labour-intensive unskilled positions for long periods of time. In parts of the country, children are found to be working, during school hours, in assembling

fireworks, beadwork, or other cottage industry-type production, as well as harvesting the yearly cotton harvest (particularly in the Xinjiang Uyghur autonomous region). However, the Committee noted the Government's indication that the 'Provisional Rules of the State Council on work-study programmes for middle and primary schools' prohibited hard work and heavy labour for middle and primary school students in the work-study context, and that the types of work performed by the students were within their capacities. [...] The Committee notes the information in the ITUC [International Trade Union Confederation] communication that large numbers of rural schools have contracted out classes of students to work in factories or in the fields in labour-intensive tasks for long periods of time. The ITUC indicates that schools from the poorer inland provinces make direct contacts with the factories to send the students who work (during breaks as well as during term time) to raise funds, and that the majority of the children involved are between the ages of 11 and 15. The ITUC indicates that, following the 2006 government directive on safety standards, some children in the Xinjiang Uyghur autonomous region were directed to marginally less taxing types of work, such as harvesting of beetroots, tomatoes and other vegetables on state farms and the collection of recycling. In 2008, the local education department prohibited children between the ages of 6 and 14 from participating in the cotton harvest, and provided increased funding to the schools that had previously harvested cotton. However, the ITUC states that this directive was not enforced at the local level and children were still forced to participate in the 2008 harvest. The ITUC reiterates that participation in this harvest is mandatory, that children may face fines for working too slowly or failing to meet production quotas, and that the behaviour during the harvest is reflected in school marks." (CRIN, 12 November 2013)

The US Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) *Annual Report 2012* also makes a reference to child labour during harvest organised by schools in Xinjiang (CECC, 10 October 2012, p.68). In 2008, the CECC published an Analysis on work-study programmes using child labour in Xinjiang (CECC, 11 January 2008). Human Rights Watch published an appeal to end child labour in state schools in 2007 (HRW, 3 December 2007).

Outside Xinjiang, there have been reports about Uyghur street children living in cities across China. In November 2013, the South China Morning Post (SCMP), a Hong Kong-based English language newspaper, provides the following account:

"The prevalence of Uygur street children from Xinjiang in cities across the mainland is fuelling tensions between Uygurs and Han Chinese, according to researchers, who say more social and economic support is needed to help tackle the problem. China has an estimated 1.5 million street children who have left home to escape poverty or domestic violence, according to the United Nations Development Programme. Of these, an estimated 100,000 are from Xinjiang. The vast majority are Uygurs, a community of nine million Turkic-speaking Muslims who are by far the largest of the 12 ethnic minorities in the far western region. Many of the under-age Uygurs living rough on the streets fall prey to human traffickers and end up as pickpockets or prostitutes, one reason why they are reviled by the Han and rejected by conservative Muslim communities at home. This may help to explain why up to 70 per cent of Uygur street children returned to the cities even after they were rounded up and sent home in a massive but largely unsuccessful



repatriation campaign over the past decade, according to Alimjan Yusan, a 23-year-old Uygur social science student at Shanghai University who, with the help of several sociologists, recently completed a report on the plight of Uygur street children. [...] The sense of exclusion Uygur children feel in both communities pushes them into lives of delinquency and discrimination, he said. 'Once Uygur juveniles are labelled thieves, they face rejection by their families back home because stealing is a sin for Muslims. And no local schools will admit such an 'evil child'.' Almost all Uygur street children come from poverty-stricken prefectures in southern Xinjiang, where some parents hand their children to traffickers to seek a better living in other cities. Grinding poverty in their home regions is another of the reasons street children filter back to the cities. [...] In February, authorities said 1,600 vagrant Uygur children had returned home in Xinjiang over the past two years. However, Turgunjan Tursun, an associate researcher at the Academy of Social Sciences of Xinjiang, said he estimated that 60 per cent to 70 per cent of them returned to the eastern cities. 'The reasons for the high prevalence of Xinjiang children, and the problems they endure, are so complicated and different from other street children in the mainland and overseas,' he said. 'The official rescue campaigns have failed to come up with comprehensive and scientific solutions to the problem, such as economic help and counselling for the children and their families.' Turgunjan said that many Uygur child pickpockets had distorted values after being brainwashed by human traffickers, who are also Uygurs. 'Muslim children dare to risk stealing from Han Chinese because they are told by their handlers that the Han majority has stolen many resources from Xinjiang, and that stealing money is just a means to help Uygurs take back what they deserve.'" (SCMP, 12 November 2013)

In July 2014, the daily Chinese newspaper Global Times reports about a Uyghur student who supports Uyghur street children outside Xinjiang:

"Eliyar Eziz spent one-third of his life outside of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, but has helped many children return to that region. The junior in Hefei University of Technology in Anhui Province, originally from Hotan prefecture, has started many charity projects to help children from Xinjiang to get off the streets, to be clothed in winter and to receive subsidies for school. [...] However, he noticed the Internet is full of rants against 'Xinjiang thieves', and there were indeed many children from Xinjiang who were stealing on the streets. People would tell their stories, post photos of the children, mostly Uyghurs, and many cities had started 'anti-thief alliances'. 'Some of these alliances would even use force to capture these children and turn them in to the police,' Eliyar said. Being from Xinjiang, Eliyar said he knew the stories behind the 'Xinjiang thieves,' that most of the children were tricked or kidnapped out of the region and forced to pickpocket for a living." (Global Times, 11 July 2014)

In an older article from August 2011, the Beijing-based newspaper China Daily reports that the Ministry of Public Security "rescued more than 500 abducted Xinjiang children in other parts of the country, busted 90 criminal rings and detained 464 suspects." After returning home, "the children are placed in government-run shelters that provide schooling and a safe environment, Zhang Chunxian, the region's Party chief, said in April" (China Daily, 17 August 2011).

In 2013, Radio Free Asia's Uyghur Service (RFA) writes about a Uyghur mother who has reportedly been held pending trial after she criticised the police for failing to investigate a suspected child trafficking ring:

"Residents said Nurgul Tohti, who had petitioned authorities in Beijing and another eastern city Dalian since 2009, was being held in the Uchturpan County Detention Center in Xinjiang's Aksu prefecture with no formal notice of her arrest being given to her family. She had previously faced pressure from authorities and been held in a 'black jail' after calling for justice over the failure by Dalian police to investigate a suspected child trafficking ring linked to the abduction of her seven-year-old son. Nurgul Tohti - who had secured her son's release after confronting the abductors herself - had also appealed to the U.N. and foreign embassies in Beijing about her case, saying that her treatment was example of ethnic discrimination by officials against China's Uyghur minority. An Uchturpan police officer, Alkam Anwar, told RFA's Uyghur Service in January that she was being held for threatening national security and that no date had been set for her trial." (RFA, 5 February 2013)

According to an August 2014 article by Tianshannet, the local Xinjiang government news portal, which cites the local civil affairs department, there are "over 30,000 orphans in Xinjiang, including 4,307 living in public institutes and 25,722 in foster homes" (Tianshannet, 20 August 2014). Tianshannet provides the following overview on government policies for orphans in Xinjiang in 2014:

"This year, Xinjiang will build five child foster centers and the infrastructure for 35 child welfare institutes. These facilities will include a guidance center for orphans of HIV/AIDS, therapy centers for disabled children and protection centers for run-away minors, said Mo Juan, Party secretary of the civil affairs department. The department will also implement favorable policies concerning education, medical aid, life support and employment for orphans and enhance infrastructure and professional talent to safeguard orphans' legitimate rights. The department will continue to increase orphan welfare support to keep up with rising economic and social development. [...] At the moment, orphans at public facilities enjoy monthly living stipends equivalent to 900 yuan each, while those in foster homes receive 600 yuan. Orphan living conditions have greatly improved." (Tianshannet, 20 August 2014)

In an older article from October 2009, RFA claims that "children belonging to the ethnic Uyghur minority at an orphanage in northwestern China routinely undergo changes of identity in which they assume Chinese names, according to current and former employees" (RFA, 22 October 2009). The article states the following about name changes of Uyghur orphans in the said institute:

"A seven-year-old called Alim had his name changed to Xin Xia, while Arzigul, 10, was forced to answer to Li Li. 'There is a record in the archives that shows where they came from,' Amangul [a former teacher at the Urumchi Welfare Institution] said. 'The surname represents which province the child is from, while the given name represents which region the child is from.' An employee who answered the phone at the orphanage

confirmed Amangul's account. 'We use only the Chinese language here, and we rename Uyghur children with Chinese names in the case of those who have no family records,' she said." (RFA, 22 October 2009)

The 2012 amendments to the Criminal Procedure Law (CPL) also include changes to provisions regarding juvenile offenders. In an overview of these amendments, the Library of Congress (LoC), which officially serves the US Congress, states that "special criminal procedures for juvenile offenders, such as conditional non-prosecution and a sealed criminal record system" have been included (LoC, 9 April 2012). The World Uyghur Congress (WUC) writes in a report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in November 2012 that "there were some welcomed improvements to the rights of juveniles. In spite of these improvements, many concerns remain regarding the practical implementation and practise-in-reality given the continued reports of minors being arrested, detained and maltreated by the authorities" (WUC, November 2012). In May 2015, Radio Free Asia (RFA) reports with reference to local sources that "Chinese authorities in Inner Mongolia have detained at least two Uyghur youths who were planning to leave the country illegally" (RFA, 8 May 2015).

No specific reports could be found on Uyghur children or youths being involved in armed conflict.

A number of sources reports of discrimination of cultural and religious practices specifically applying to women and children. For more information on this subject please refer to [section 4.5](#) (Freedom of religion) of this compilation. The use of Uyghur language in education and possible impacts of "bilingual schooling" for children is discussed in [section 4.7](#) (Access to labour and education).

#### *4.12.1 Impact of the Family Planning Policy on Uyghurs*

Article 25 of the PRC constitution states that "the State promotes family planning so that population growth may fit the plans for economic and social development" (Constitution of the People's Republic of China, 14 March 2004, Article 25). In October 2015, China's official news agency Xinhua announced the most recent changes in China's family planning policy:

"China will allow all couples to have two children, abandoning its decades-long one-child policy, the Communist Party of China (CPC) announced after a key meeting on Thursday. [...] China's family planning policy was first introduced in the late 1970s to rein in the surging population by limiting most urban couples to one child and most rural couples to two children, if the first child born was a girl. The policy was later relaxed to say that any parents could have a second child if they were both only children. The one-child policy was further loosened in November 2013 after the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee, with its current form stipulating that couples are allowed to have two children if one of them is an only child." (Xinhua, 29 October 2015)

The Library of Congress (LoC), a research library officially serving the United States Congress, points out, however, that "specific measures that really have an impact in practice, such as rules about who may have a second child [...] are rather formulated at the local level" (LoC, 29 October 2015). Article 18 of the Population and Family Planning Law of the People's Republic

of China, which went into effect in September 2002, therefore stipulates the following provision:

“Where the requirements specified by laws and regulations are met, plans for a second child, if requested, may be made. Specific measures in this regard shall be formulated by the people’s congress or its standing committee of a province, autonomous region, or municipality directly under the Central Government. Family planning shall also be introduced to the ethnic peoples. Specific measures in this regard shall be formulated by the people’s congress or its standing committee of a province, autonomous region, or municipality directly under the Central Government.” (Population and Family Planning Law of the People’s Republic of China, 29 December 2001)

For instance, the US Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) reports that the CCP announced in November 2013 “a new exception to its population planning policy - couples in which one parent was an only child were now allowed a second child”. However, by December 2014 the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region had not amended its regulations (CECC, 9 December 2014).

The local family planning legislation in Xinjiang regarding ethnic minorities is summarised on the website of the PRC’S embassy to the USA:

“Based on the state family planning policy, the People’s Congress of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region has, according to the region’s actual circumstances, formulated the ‘Provisional Regulations for Family Planning of Ethnic Minorities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region’ to implement a more liberal childbirth policy for ethnic minorities than for the Han people and promote the growth of the population of ethnic minorities, which enables the natural population growth of ethnic minorities in Xinjiang to increase at a higher rate than that of the local Han people.” (Embassy of the PRC in the USA, undated)

In its annual report 2016, Freedom House reports that Uyghur families are permitted three children but that “cash incentives encourage Uighur families to have fewer children than the permitted three-child limit for ethnic minorities, while in some locales, authorities have intensified crackdowns on ‘unauthorized births.’” (Freedom House, 27 January 2016)

Stratfor, a geopolitical intelligence firm that provides strategic analysis and forecasting based in Austin, Texas, wrote about the local party secretary’s plans to lower Xinjiang’s birthrate and the possible implications of such a change in direction in August 2014:

“In an editorial published in Chinese state media Aug. 6, Zhang Chunxian, the Party secretary for the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, said the Chinese government intends to apply the same family planning policy for all ethnic groups in southern Xinjiang, including both Han Chinese and Uighur minorities. Zhang did not specify how this policy would be implemented but noted that it would aim to ‘lower and stabilize an appropriate birthrate’ across - he reiterated - all minority ethnic groups in the region. What Zhang’s editorial did not say is that southern Xinjiang is home to about half of China’s entire Uighur Muslim population. [...] In reality, this is not a policy directed at all ethnic

minorities. It is a policy that specifically aims - under the rubric of an effort to rationalize the country's family planning policy - to limit the expansion of the Uighur population. Zhang's announcement marks a potentially significant departure in the Chinese government's strategy for managing relations with the Uighur Muslim minority, and perhaps with minority groups in general, in China. Until now, ethnic minorities have been effectively exempt from the country's one-child policy and other family planning measures. Uighurs in rural areas - that is, the majority of Uighurs - are allowed to have up to three children, in sharp contrast to China's one-child policy, which was largely focused on Han Chinese since 1978. In practice, with a few exceptions, Uighurs, like Tibetans and other ethnic minorities, have seldom been subject to population controls like their ethnic Han counterparts." (Stratfor, 7 August 2014)

In November 2015, shortly after the announcement of the end of the one-child policy, the Economist provided the following overview of the family planning policy in Xinjiang, also referencing the local party leader's comments on potentially implementing a family planning policy applying to all ethnic groups in Xinjiang:

"Birth restrictions imposed on China's ethnic minorities have always been lighter than those on the Han majority. Han Chinese are only now being granted the right to have two children; most minorities living in urban areas have long enjoyed it. Non-Hans living in the countryside are allowed to have three, and sometimes more. But although family-planning rules are now being relaxed in China, in the far-western region of Xinjiang, where ethnic Uighurs make up 50% of the population, the government is tightening controls. [...] Uighurs have fewer children than they used to, but since 2010 the birth rate has been rising again. In mainly Uighur Kashgar, a prefecture which borders on Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia, it is four times the national average. Hans, who feel targeted by rising separatist militancy among Uighurs, worry that they may become outnumbered. So the government is relaxing residency restrictions to attract more Han immigrants. Since 2012 all Hans in southern Xinjiang - a hotbed of separatism - have been allowed to have two children. The government is also trying to curb Uighur births. Last year Xinjiang's party chief said it was necessary to lower fertility and implement a family planning policy 'equal for all ethnic groups', as part of efforts to fight terrorism. Early this year another senior official said southern Xinjiang had 'worryingly high birth rates'. This year, southern Xinjiang doubled payouts to Uighur couples who have fewer than their quota to 6,000 yuan (\$950). Each parent also receives 1,800 yuan a year for life. In Yining, a city in north-western Xinjiang, which four years ago became the first part of Xinjiang to ban the wearing of face-covering veils in public, a local newspaper reported in March that the government there was cracking down on unauthorised births as part of a battle against 'extremism'. In June a township in Yining posted news of a similar campaign against 'illegal births'. The government may have made some progress with its assault on large families. Though birth rates in Xinjiang as a whole are rising, those in Yining have been falling for the past three years." (The Economist, 7 November 2015)

The same Economist article states that in 1983, Uyghur "rioted when officials introduced the current limits. Some of them saw the restrictions as an affront to Islam. As a result, officials in some areas applied them more flexibly, even allowing couples in some far-flung places to

have four or five children” (The Economist, 7 November 2015). No explicit reference could be found on the status of Uyghur children who were born as the fourth child of a family that had thus exceeded its allocated quota. In December 2014 the CECC states, however, that “Chinese authorities have reportedly continued to use coercion in the enforcement of population planning policies” and refers to an article from Radio Free Asia (RFA) reporting about “four forced abortions in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region” (CECC, 9. December 2014).

The US Department of State (USDOS) also reported about the abortions in its June 2015 *Country Report on Human Rights Practices*:

“In December 2013 overseas media reported that officials at Nurluq Hospital in Keriye County of Xinjiang’s Hotan Prefecture carried out forced abortions on four pregnant women. According to the report, the deputy chief of Hotan’s Arish Township confirmed that authorities had carried out four of six planned abortions utilizing abortion-inducing drugs. The head of the township’s Family Planning Department stated the abortions were carried out following orders from higher authorities because the women had exceeded the legal limit. The husband of one victim stated that his wife had been seven months’ pregnant when the procedure was performed and that the baby had been born alive before succumbing hours later to the effects of the chemical toxins. According to RFA, Arish Township Party Secretary Sun Jibing apologized to the family of Qembennisahanim, and the county government fined the hospital RMB 100,000 (\$16,300). Heyrinsa Mamut, a government employee at the Kalpin County Statistics Bureau in Aksu Prefecture, was forced to abort her pregnancy at five-months’ gestation on February 15, under pressure by the family-planning commission officer and her supervisor at the statistics bureau, who threatened her with dismissal and heavy financial penalties unless she aborted her child.” (USDOS, 25 June 2015, section 6)

RFA published the following article on the four abortions in December 2013, outlining that the fine for a fourth child can be up to RMB 100,000:

“Four Uyghur women in China’s troubled northwestern region of Xinjiang have been forced by authorities to undergo abortions - one of them nine months into her pregnancy - under Beijing’s brutally-enforced one-child policy, local officials and parents said. [...] ‘We had planned to perform forced abortions on six women. Four of them have already undergone the abortions,’ Eniver Momin, deputy chief of Hotan’s Arish township where the mothers were injected with abortion-inducing drugs, told RFA’s Uyghur Service. ‘One more woman is waiting in hospital to undergo the abortion while another woman has escaped before undergoing the process,’ Momin said. He said that local authorities are considering whether to suspend performing forced abortions amid public concerns over the four cases. Awat Han, head of the family planning department in Arish township, also confirmed with RFA that four forced abortions had been conducted over the last week, saying she was only following orders from the higher authorities bent on enforcing the controversial one-child policy introduced in the 1970’s to curb population growth. Under a new law passed last week, married couples in China will be permitted to have a second child if one spouse is an only child. Current regulations allow a second child in certain cases, including if both spouses are only children themselves. As ethnic minorities, the

Uyghurs are supposed to be exempt from the one-child policy. [...] The depressed husband of one of the four women forced to undergo the abortions told RFA that his wife delivered their baby boy alive but he died an hour later. Memettursun Kawul said they had been anxiously awaiting the birth of their son after having three daughters but township officials led by Awat Han had been forcing his wife to go to the hospital for an abortion since she was six months pregnant in November. 'We said that we were willing to pay a fine of 50,000 to 100,000 yuan [U.S. \$8,250 to U.S. \$16,500] but they refused,' he said. 'In November, my wife and I left the township and hid in Hotan city in one of my relatives' house but Awat Han came to the place with two village policemen last week and took her to the Nurluq Hospital in Arish Township,' he said. [...] Kawul said that at the Nurluq Hospital, where his wife is now recovering, another Uyghur woman was awaiting a forced abortion, identifying her as Rozihan Memet and her husband as Metkurban Nuri. [...] Metkurban Nuri, the husband of another Uyghur woman who was forced to abort her baby four months into her pregnancy, said he and his wife had been hiding in Hotan city for a week but local family planning officials located them on Saturday." (RFA, 30 December 2013)

Another RFA article in January 2014 referred to the cases described above adding that one of the four Uyghur women forced to have abortions had been ill at the time and that it remains unclear if a fifth woman has had an abortion at the hospital. The article also cites a local woman who is head of the woman's union giving in regard to the ambiguity of rules in Xinjiang:

"Experts say the rules governing 'excess birth' are unclear and often abused by local authorities, or by the rich and politically connected, who can afford to pay large fines for bigger families. Keriya Women's Union head Aygul Abduweli, who formerly worked in the family planning department for eight years, said laws were unclear on how far local officials could go to enforce the limits, since local officials are authorized to adjust the regulations to their own areas. [...] She said regulations varied on how far into her pregnancy a woman could be ordered to abort." (RFA, 13 January 2014)

No corroborating information could be found on the apology of Party Secretary Sun Jibing and the fining of the hospital of RMB 100,000 as stated in the USDOS report above.

#### **4.13 Forced return and deportation of Uyghur refugees to China**

The US Department of State (USDOS) writes in its *Report on International Religious Freedom 2014* that "hundreds of ethnic Uyghurs reportedly fled or attempted to flee to Southeast Asia through China's southern border." According to the report, Thailand, Vietnam, and Malaysia have all recorded an increase in illegal immigrants believed to be Uyghurs and "the government reportedly sought the forcible return of ethnic Uyghurs living outside the country, many of whom had sought asylum from religious persecution". The USDOS notes that "in some cases third countries, Vietnam in particular, complied with Chinese requests for forcible return of Uyghur asylum-seekers. There were reports of imprisonment and torture of Uyghurs who were returned. The government's control of information coming out of Xinjiang, together with the increasingly tight security posture there, made it difficult to verify the conflicting reports". (USDOS, 14 October 2015, section 2)

The annual report of the US Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) in 2015 provides the following overview of Uyghurs in detention in Thailand and their deportation to China:

“During this reporting year, international media reports highlighted a trend of Uyghurs traveling from the XUAR to Southeast Asian countries in hopes of later finding refuge in Turkey. This migration came amid a period of security crackdowns in the XUAR and restrictions on Uyghur Muslims’ religious practices. In particular, reports highlighted the situation of hundreds of individuals believed to be Uyghurs whom Thai authorities were holding in detention facilities. Thai authorities intercepted and held more than 400 Uyghurs beginning in March 2014, including large numbers of women and children, although some reportedly fled from Thai detention facilities in November 2014. [...] In late June 2015, Thai authorities allowed 173 Uyghur women and children to leave Thailand and travel to Turkey, where they planned to resettle. The group reportedly included some of the 17 Uyghurs who had appealed to the Thai court. On July 9, 2015, Thai authorities forcibly deported 109 Uyghurs to China, in spite of widespread concern on the part of rights groups that Chinese authorities would persecute them upon their return. Chinese officials had reportedly pressured Thai authorities to deport the Uyghurs. The U.S. State Department, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and some international rights groups condemned the deportation, describing it as a violation of international law and warning that Chinese authorities were likely to subject them to harsh treatment. As of July 9 2015, between 50 and 67 Uyghurs reportedly remained in Thai detention facilities.” (CECC, 8 October 2015, p. 288)

The London-based economic newspaper Financial Times reports about the Chinese reaction to the 400 Uyghur detainees in Thailand in April 2014:

“China has stepped up pressure on Thai authorities to repatriate more than 400 Uighur refugees who have been detained as illegal immigrants in Thailand after fleeing the increasingly restive Chinese territory of Xinjiang. But human rights groups, the US, Europe and the UN are urging the Thai government not to send the large group of migrants, including more than 60 children, back to China for fear they will face severe punishment. “Given the pattern of persecution faced by those Uighurs who’ve tried to flee China and have been sent back in the past, we believe these people are at great risk if they are sent back to China,” said Phil Robertson, deputy director of the Asia division of Human Rights Watch.

[...] In answer to questions about the case, China’s foreign ministry would only say that “China and Thailand have maintained close co-operation in combating illegal immigration activities”.

[...] Scores of Uighur illegal migrants have been repatriated to China from southeast Asian countries in recent years. Some of them have been executed or sentenced to hefty jail terms while others have simply disappeared, according to rights groups and diplomats.” (FT, 3 April 2014)



In March 2015, Reuters reports about the complicated relations of China, Thailand and Turkey when dealing with the repatriation of Uyghurs in Thai detention:

“A family of 17 suspected Uighur Muslims at the center of a diplomatic tug-of-war between Turkey and China will remain in custody after a Thai court on Friday rejected their argument that their prolonged detention was illegal. Turkey and China both claim the detainees as nationals in a dispute with potential implications for hundreds of other suspected Uighur detainees and to where they should be repatriated. The group has been in detention for a year. The court ruled that Thai immigration had the right to detain the group but made no ruling on their nationality. Under Thai law, court approval must be sought for detention periods of more than seven days. The family claimed to be Turkish and, while still in detention, were issued with passports by the Turkish Embassy and granted permission to travel to Turkey. China insists the 17 detainees are Chinese Uighurs who should be returned to the northwest Chinese region of Xinjiang, according to court documents seen by Reuters. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying, asked about those detained, said China was willing to increase cooperation with countries such as Thailand to fight illegal immigration and cross-border crime. She did not comment on the case itself. Turkey and China have both asked Thailand for help in repatriating the group, Thai National Security Council secretary-general Anusit Kunakorn said after a first hearing of the case on Tuesday.” (Reuters, 27 March 15)

One of the most prominent cases of deportation of Uyghurs from Thailand to China in 2015 was reported in July. RFA gives the following account:

“Thailand said on Thursday it had forcibly repatriated nearly 100 Uyghurs to China, a move that drew criticism from human rights groups and protests in Turkey over the expulsion of the Turkic-speaking Muslim minority that suffers harsh repression under Chinese rule. Gen. Prayuth Chan-ocha, Thailand’s prime minister, told reporters his country was ‘not part of the dispute’ between China and Uyghurs and had received guarantees from Beijing that the Uyghurs forced onto planes late on Wednesday would be treated fairly. ‘They will be provided with justice and safety. China confirmed they will be given access to fair justice,’ Prayuth told reporters at the government house in Bangkok. ‘If they are not implicated in any offenses, they will be released and given land for making a living. But if any are implicated with crimes, they will be tried,’ he said. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees said it was shocked at the deportation of a group believed to include women and children who did not wish to return to China. [...] ‘It is anticipated that the Chinese government is behind this covert, and indeed heinous, operation which aims to bring these Uyghurs back to harsh punishment, which possibly includes capital punishment,’ the WUC [World Uyghur Congress] said.” (RFA, 9 July 2015a)

Highlighting the continuing challenges between China, Thailand and Turkey, the article goes on to discuss the recent resettlement of 172 Uyghurs to Turkey:

“The forced deportation came despite the resettlement in Turkey last week of 173 women and children from among the detainees in Thailand, following long-lasting negotiations between the two countries. Maj. Gen. Weerachon Sukhontapatipak, deputy

spokesperson for the Thai government, said in Bangkok the repatriation was 'in line with a citizen verification procedure, which indicated them as Chinese and they must follow China's justice.' The earlier release of Uyghurs to Turkey was a different matter, he told reporters at a news conference. 'In regards with the 170 Uyghurs Thailand sent over to Turkey late June, this is an indication for Thailand's compliance with international-standard citizenship verification process. They are verified being Turkish, so they were sent to Turkey,' said Sukhontapatipak. 'We admitted it is a very sensitive security issue. However, Thailand has continual discussions with both China and Turkey,' he added. 'There are about 50 Uyghur who are pending citizenship verification completion,' said Sukhontapatipak." (RFA, 9 July 2015a)

A number of newspaper articles and human rights groups reported on the above-mentioned July 2015 deportations of Uyghurs from Thailand (see for example NYT, 9 July 2015; Bangkok Post, 9 July 2015; HRW 27 January 2016). Amnesty International wrote in its *Report 2015/16* that "in July, Thailand deported 109 Uyghurs to China, where they were at risk of torture, enforced disappearance and execution" (AI, 24 February 2016). The US newspaper Washington Post wrote that "China is Thailand's second-largest trading partner, which makes it especially dangerous for the smaller country to antagonize its powerful neighbor" (Washington Post, 24 July 2015). There was some controversy when the World Uyghur Congress (WUC) published a statement on its website claiming that 25 Uyghurs had allegedly been killed when boarding the plane to be deported to China. The Thai government strongly rejected these claims and the WUC removed the statement from its website shortly afterwards (RFA, 9 July 2015b).

In the aftermath of these deportations, RFA writes in October that "China's official media has not published any news about the group of Uyghurs, so their fates remain unknown" (RFA, 21 October 2015). The same article does however report about an official film featuring two men who were forced to return to China:

"Authorities in northwestern China's Xinjiang region have been publicly showing a film about two Uyghurs forcibly repatriated from Thailand as a deterrent to others in the area not to flee the country and seek asylum elsewhere, a local Communist Party cadre and police officers said. The two men, one in his 40s who has a family and the other in his 30s, were among a group of 109 asylum-seeking Uyghur refugees who were forcibly returned to China from Thailand in early July under pressure from Beijing. [...] 'The two men were brought back to our county by the police who let them publicly acknowledge their regret and confess their guilt about their illegal journey,' said Alim Rahman, a member of the stability work team of the county's Yengi'eriq township. After they returned, the pair underwent a two-month political education and confession process arranged by the political and legal committee of county's Communist Party Committee, he told RFA's Uyghur Service. Awat county's radio and television department made a 25-minute film about their 'illegal journey' and 'illegal border-crossing' stories, he said. 'They talked about how they were influenced by religious extremists, holy war propaganda and illegal preachers, and how they ruined their own futures,' Rahman said. [...] Cadres have gathered residents from all villages at meeting halls to see the film and hear the confessions and regrets of the two Uyghurs, said Uyghur officers at the county's Dolan

(Daolang) and Tamtoghraq (Tamutuogelake) township police stations. 'We show this film to the villagers every Friday, and the work team members tell residents that this is the best place for them, and they can find no better life in the world than they can here, not abroad,' Rahman said. 'China is a great country now, and many people in the other countries admire our country's economic development,' he said. 'If anybody tries to flee to foreign countries like these two escapees did, their destiny will be more miserable than those of the previous detainees.' [...] The two Uyghurs have been tried in Awat county court, but the court has not yet announced its decision, Rahman said, adding that they pair would likely receive long prison sentences. 'These kinds of crimes, such as religious extremism and ethnic separatism or illegally cross borders to join the holy war, are always punished severely,' he said." (RFA, 21 October 2015).

Additionally to the deportation cases from Thailand, the annual report of the US Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) in 2015 also provides a summary of cases concerning such deportations from other South East Asian countries:

"In addition, in October 2014, rights groups urged Malaysian authorities not to deport 155 Uyghurs, including 76 children, who had fled to Malaysia from China. In December 2012, Malaysian authorities deported six Uyghur asylum seekers to China, although the UNHCR was still reviewing their asylum claims. In January 2015, Chinese authorities said that since they began cracking down on 'human smuggling' in southern border regions in May 2014, they had detained 1,204 people for their role in 'human smuggling' or for trying to cross the border illegally. Reports attributed the crackdown largely to officials' attempts to block Uyghurs they said were connected with violence or terrorism from crossing the border. Chinese police used lethal force in at least three incidents involving individuals who were likely Uyghurs attempting to cross the border into Vietnam and who, in at least two of the incidents, authorities said attacked police." (CECC, 8 October 2015, p. 288)

The English-language newspaper Japan Times which is based in Tokyo reported about deportations from Malaysia in October 2014:

"A Malaysian human rights group on Sunday called on the government not to forcibly deport 155 Chinese ethnic Uighurs reported to be in the country illegally, amid concerns for their fate in China. Malaysian media reported Friday that the Uighurs, including 76 children, were found in a pair of cramped apartments in the capital, Kuala Lumpur, in a raid two days earlier by Immigration Department officials. The Malaysian government, which has sought closer trade ties with Beijing, came under criticism 18 months ago from international human rights groups and the U.N. refugee agency for sending six Uighurs back to China in an earlier case.

Malaysian rights group Suaram said there is concern that deporting the Uighurs 'might put their life at risk, especially since there are 76 children involved.'" (Japan Times, 5 October 2014)

In January 2016 Amnesty International (AI) writes an Appeal for Li Xin, a Chinese journalist who went missing in Thailand after he fled from China in October 2015. AI provides the following summary of recent deportations to China:

South East Asian countries are increasingly violating the non-refoulement principle following pressure from the Chinese government. ... A number of countries have forcibly returned dissidents and members of ethnic minorities who had fled China, in violation of their obligations of non-refoulement. In November 2015, Jiang Yefei and Dong Guangping, two Chinese activists recognized as refugees by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), were deported from Thailand to China, and are at grave risk of torture and other ill-treatment, as well as unfair trials ... In July 2015, the Thai authorities forcibly returned to China some 100 individuals, mainly ethnic Uighurs of Chinese citizenship who were at risk of torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment upon return. In December 2012, Malaysia forcibly returned six Uighurs, whose claims for asylum were pending with the UNHCR. In December 2009, the Cambodian authorities forcibly returned 20 ethnic Uighur asylum seekers. Of these 20, five are reported to have been sentenced to life imprisonment, while eight others are reported to have been sentenced to prison terms ranging from 16 to 20 year, after closed trials." (AI, 28 January 2016)

In a July 2015 article by The Independent, Amnesty International's East Asia regional director Nicholas Bequelin is quoted as saying: "Time and time again we have seen Uighurs returned to China disappearing into a black hole, with some detained, tortured and in some cases, sentenced to death and executed." (The Independent, 13 July 2015)

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