



**No Borders MUN**

# **Background Guide**

**SOCHUM**

2 | Supporting Uyghurs in Xinjiang province

No Borders MUN 2022

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## Committee Introduction

Delegates, welcome to the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM)!

SOCHUM is the third committee out of six committees of the United Nations General Assembly and was established in 1945 under the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. SOCHUM is tasked with a variety of topics related to social, humanitarian, and cultural issues that affect the world. As one of the six GA committees, SOCHUM cannot enforce anything on individual nations, though it can suggest guidelines, encourage nations to act, and support coordinating efforts. An important aspect of SOCHUM is protecting human rights and has taken actions to help women's advancement, protection of children, elimination of racial discrimination, improve the treatment of refugees, and much more. SOCHUM also takes action on societal issues such as international drug control, crime prevention, and global literacy. To initiate successful operations, SOCHUM works hand in hand with other nongovernmental organizations as well as government agencies such as the World Health Organization, United Nations Children's Fund, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

In this committee, delegates will be creating resolutions, amendments, points of information, and speeches about issues surrounding the advancement of women's rights, the suppression of Uyghurs, and supporting Ukrainian refugees. We hope delegates will immerse themselves in the world of MUN and come up with feasible solutions to address these issues.

## Agenda Introduction

Uyghurs, a predominantly Turkic-speaking ethnic group primarily from China's northwestern region of Xinjiang, have been arbitrarily detained for their basic rights due to the Chinese government's repressive policy. Many reports by international organizations, states and nongovernment organizations agree the Uyghur have been targeted by the Chinese government for extraordinary discrimination and isolation.

The repression began at least a decade ago but severely escalated in 2017. Since then, the Chinese government has imprisoned more than 1 million people and subjected those not detained to intense surveillance, religious restrictions, forced labor, and even forced sterilizations for women. Forced labor forms an integral part of a broader government strategy of abuse and minority repression to maintain political stability and internal security in the region.

China justifies its actions by insisting that Uyghur militants are waging a violent campaign for an independent state. Human rights organizations, UN officials, and many foreign governments are urging China to stop the abuses, recalling it as a genocide. Still, the Chinese officials refused to share information about the detention centers, and prevented journalists and foreign investigators from examining them. As an international community responsible for securing global human rights, addressing this case of violation seems to be an inevitable step to keep up with SOCHUM and the United Nations' vision.

## Letter from the Chairs

Dear SOCHUM delegates,

Welcome to the third annual conference of NBMUN! I'm Stella Lee, a rising junior at Korea International School Jeju Campus. To introduce myself as an MUNer, I have been part of the MUN program since 2018, and this will be my 5th conference attending as a chair.

Since 2020, I have been part of NBMUN's arduous journey to host a truly global conference with 'no border' between participants. Throughout the past three years, NBMUN granted me an opportunity to widen my sight by interacting with delegates and chairs from different nationalities and ethnicities. It is truly inspiring to see how students with different backgrounds share the same passion when it comes to participating in a model united nation.

I understand the pressure that comes from preparing a conference, especially if it is an international one. Regardless of how experienced you are, I genuinely hope that you enjoy this process of preparation. Please feel free to contact me if you have any inquiries regarding this agenda or conference as a whole. See you soon, and good luck!

Best,

Stella Lee

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# Key Terms

## **Belt and road initiative The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**

Chinese government-sponsored plan to revive the Silk Road network of land and sea trading routes and, in so doing, connect China with Europe and Asia. The BRI aims to tackle problems of poverty and regional isolation through infrastructure and other development projects designed to boost economic growth. As of May 2019, more than 60 countries (two-thirds of the world's population) have established BRI projects or have expressed interest in doing so.

## **Xinjiang**

Xinjiang lies in the northwestern corner of the country bordering Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Russia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. Rich in natural resources, it was once a thriving region of China due to ancient Silk Road trade, and now is a hub for the Belt and Road Initiative. The region has long experienced tension between the indigenous Uighur people and Communist government. Although officially an autonomous province, much of Xinjiang is actually controlled by the central Beijing government due to its weak sovereignty. The population of around 20 million people includes various Muslim minority groups, the largest of which are the Uighur.

## **Uighur**

The Uighurs are the largest of the Muslim minority groups that has been detained in re-education camps. There are approximately 11 million Uighurs in western China, which makes the main ethnic division 45% Uighur and 40% Han Chinese. Uighurs feel their culture and livelihoods are threatened by the mass migration of Han Chinese to Xinjiang over the past few decades, a period of considerable economic development. On the other hand, the Communist government has blamed Uighur separatists for several violent attacks since the late twentieth century.

## **Re-education Camp**

A camp or prison where ideological dissidents undergo reeducation or indoctrination. The Chinese government under Xi Jinping describes the internment camps where Uighurs and other ethnic groups have been reportedly detained as vocational training centers. Since 2017, Chinese officials have been stealthy forcing the Uighyphers into their educational camps to 'brainwash' them.

## **Extremism**

Defined as an “advocacy of extreme measures or views,” The eradication of extremism is one of the justifications that Chinese authorities used for the camps. Officials claim that extremist threat comes from separatist Islamist groups bounds them to combat violent terrorist criminal activities.

### **Separatism**

Defined as “a belief in, movement for, or state of separation”. Ethnic separatism is also included under “The Three Evil Forces”. This would lead to instability and loss of power for the central government. Western claims of poor governance by Xinjiang authorities have only emboldened separatists and stirred up more unrest, according to the editorial. The main goal of the re-education camps is to prevent terrorism related to Islamic separatism by re-educating locals in Chinese history, language, and culture. Rights groups such as Human Rights Watch describe this more as an effort to wipe out local culture and force locals to renounce Islam.

### **Terrorism**

The Chinese government blames the terrorist attacks in the Xinjiang region and elsewhere in China on the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, a group founded by Muslim Uighurs that has been linked to al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. By identifying the root cause as separatist ideas in the wider Uighur society reinforced by cultural and religious practices, Chinese officials justify their actions of sending Uighurs to re-educational camps. The governor of Xinjiang, Shohrat Zakir, has stated that the Chinese government is fighting “terrorism and extremism” in accordance with UN resolutions. Nonetheless, Human rights groups state that while some Uighur Muslims have joined militant Islamic groups, the unrest in Xinjiang stems from China's oppression of people there. Exiled Uighur groups accuse China of exaggerating the threat in order to justify repression and even question the existence of the East Turkestan Islamic Movement.

### **Genocide**

The United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide defines genocide as any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group: killing members of the group, causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group or forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. In addition, family members are kept separate by the Chinese government denying permission for families to reunite overseas. Governments such as Australia have formally sought permission for family members to be permitted to exit China and reunite overseas.

## Historical Background

Treated since the 1990s as second-class residents, ruled by the majority ethnic Han, the Uyghurs came under special scrutiny after the 11 September 2001 attacks in the United States. The attacks did not directly affect China, but alarmed the leadership in Beijing and Xinjiang. The discovery of small numbers of Uyghurs fighting with the Taliban, seeking autonomy and sharia rule had a great effect on Chinese leaders. In 2009 about 200 people died in clashes in Xinjiang, which the Chinese blamed on Uyghurs, who wanted their own state. Discrimination against the Uyghurs rapidly turned into intrusive police monitoring of all 12 million. 2 Uighur women entering a bazaar in Hotan. The 12 million Uyghurs mostly live in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, speaking a language similar to Turkish. They see themselves as culturally and ethnically closer to Turkey and Central Asian nations. Today they make up less than half of Xinjiang's population. In recent decades the Beijing government encouraged mass migration of Han Chinese to Xinjiang, diluting the minority population there.



## Current State of Affairs

On the behalf of the current state of Affairs, the house must address the United Nation's effort to ameliorate the tension between not only Ungyhurs and China, but also among international communities. Followings are a list of UN involvement in relevant resolutions and treaties.

- United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- 1951 Refugee Convention, Resolution 2198 (XXI) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination Adopted and opened for signature and ratification by General Assembly resolution of 21st December 1965
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16th December 1966 entry into force 23rd March 1976, in accordance with Article 49
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16th December 1966 entry into force 3 January 1976, in accordance with article 27

## Stances of Parties

### China

China is the reason for the very existence of the Re-Education camps and is the only country which is actually profiting from them. It is also important to note, that because of the fact that this is happening in Chinese territory, there is not much ground for governments from different areas of the globe to act. Moreover, as previously mentioned, China is continuously denying all allegations about the camps' existence

### United States of America

The United States has been one of the first countries to voice their disapproval of the situation in China and has asked for the Chinese government to close the re-education camps, and for the international community to take action. The US has also threatened the possibility of sanctions being imposed on China if the unjust treatment of the Uyghurs does not come to an end.

### Russian Federation

The Russian Federation and 35 other countries supported China in a letter accusing the West of "politicising human rights" and commended what it called China's "remarkable achievements" in human rights. Russia is also one of China's allies and economic partners, and one of the BRI's most involved members. However, Russia first met the BRI with reluctance, concerned that there would be a conflict with Russia's own Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). In 2019, Russian President Putin decided to link the EEU with the BRI, but Russia's alliance with China is unbalanced since Russia's economy Re-education Camps in China's Xinjiang Province 6 and trade volume is only one eighth of the trade volume of China. The BRI is likely to widen the gap, which may negatively impact China-Russia relations.

# Possible Solutions

## Sanctions

By imposing sanctions, the Chinese government may be compelled to limit their violations of the human rights of Uighurs in the Xinjiang region. Additionally, for countries that currently run Belt and Road Initiative projects, the future of projects can be considered as leverage to help pressure China into taking action that would satisfy the wider international community. Many countries are reluctant to impose sanctions on China because of the economic repercussions that will result from it. Therefore, as some countries prioritize their economic and strategic relationship with China, governments choose to ignore human rights abuses. This includes Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Indonesia, and other Muslim-majority countries. Sanctions can also lead to economic repercussions for the global market and result in economic loss.

## Export denial

By denying exports of technologies (etc) that could be used to continue the abuse of targeted groups in the Xinjiang region, nations could be directly reducing the amount of control the Chinese government has over the Uighurs in the Xinjiang region, and in so doing, protecting their privacy online as well as their freedom of movement. This can, again, result in economic repercussions because countries would be reducing the amount of trade of particular products between themselves and China. Therefore, countries may be reluctant to deny exports of technology and other items that facilitate abuse. However, they can mitigate this consequence by engaging in greater trade and cooperation among country groups that do not include China.

## Conducating UN-led investigation

A UN fact-finding team will have more credibility than a small group of reporters traveling to and reporting on the conditions of Xinjiang. To create a UN team dedicated to fact-finding missions may take a long time to develop and to negotiate the terms of a visit, if China permits this at all.

## Education and cultural exchanges

By focusing on sharing the cultural elements of the Uighur community (that China has not identified as extremist) between regional groups within and beyond Xinjiang, with the rest of China, and with the world, the UN can work to preserve Uighur culture. The Chinese government could object to these exchanges, but even if they do, it would be widely publicized and would essentially bring international pressure and tension back on China for rejecting a peaceful cultural exchange.

## Diplomatic attempts

Encouraging high-level diplomats from Muslim-majority countries and international Islamic organizations to start and continue to visit Xinjiang and report back to their local Muslim organizations and the HRC on the situation would exert pressure on China to be accountable to its Muslim-majority country allies. The presence of high-level Muslim-nation diplomats may also bolster good will with local Xinjiang groups and a sense that they are supported beyond the Chinese border by the wider Muslim community. The issue should not become a Muslim problem but rather remain of interest to all nations.

### **International cooperation**

All nations share an interest in maintaining peace and security at home and working to prevent extremism and terrorism. Focusing on common goals builds trust. Countries can cooperate to share information, expertise and resources to combat terrorism. It has so far proven difficult to agree on definitions of extremism. A lack of trust between nations has limited cooperation. The importance of protecting human rights has often been secondary to achieving national security. It is the task of the United Nations and this HRC to continue to promote collaboration to promote the protection of human rights as a pillar for achieving lasting peace

## Questions to Consider

- 1) What SDGs should be considered when specifying ways to support Uighers in Xinjiang province?
- 2) What action could be taken to prompt China to comply with Human Rights regulations without violating the nation's sovereignty?
- 3) Which NGOs, IGOs, private entities, or individuals from outside China could potentially exert pressure on China to change its policies?
- 4) How might these groups or individuals be encouraged to use their influence to promote human rights protections?
- 5) What kind of relationships is China developing with other countries through its Belt and Road Initiative?
- 6) What steps could local Xinjiang government and non-government stakeholders take towards solving the problem of reeducation camps?
- 7) What are ways to fight violent extremism that a large majority of countries can agree upon? What are some examples from your own country's experience that you could highlight to help solve the issue?
- 8) How can UN groups encourage China's pro-human rights actions? What role does geography play in this conflict? What role does the economy play?

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