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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[11 February 2019]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



Human Rights situation in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (UAR), China

Society of Threatened Peoples is deeply concerned about the arbitrary arrests and extrajudicial detentions of ethnic minorities in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (UAR), China (hereinafter “XUAR”). Since April 2017, hundreds of thousands of Uighurs, Kazakhs and Kyrgyz have been detained in political re-education camps throughout the XUAR as they are accused of extremist religious thoughts. Uighurs and Kazakhs have been facing discriminating measures for years such as religious repression, cultural destruction, sinicization and discrimination. Society for Threatened Peoples is particularly alarmed by the spreading of Xinjiang so-called ‘counterterrorist measures’ to other Chinese regions and against other primarily Muslim nationalities, especially the Hui people.

Satellite photos confirm that there is an increasing number of camps in which Uighur, Kazakh and Kyrgyz are confined. Estimates suggest at least 1,000 re-education facilities in the XUAR and at least one million detainees which would equal about 10% of the whole population. The Chinese government claims the “vocational training centers” to be for educational purposes only, but there are several reports and witnesses proclaiming serious human rights abuses inside the camps. The full extent of the re-education program is still obscure, as there is no unfettered access for human rights experts to the region. Due to the unmistakable proof of extrajudicial internment, Chinese authorities are lobbying in favor of the measures to legitimize their actions. Various sources affirm that as much as 500,000 Uighurs, Kazakhs and Kyrgyz have been transferred to other regions. In addition to that, the authorities in January of 2019 gave a planned tour to diplomats and journalists from 12 mainly Muslim countries to ensure their credibility and to deny the human rights abuses.

The observed camps were chosen by Chinese government officials. Besides the usage of torturous methods in attempting to politically and religiously re-educate the inmates, there is evidence for forced labor in one of the camps, too.

Children of those detained get torn apart from their parents whereas dozens of orphanages are being built day by day to target and politically indoctrinate the footless youth. For instance, they are forced to speak Mandarin as a measure to get rid of their respective minority culture.

Moreover, investigative reports and the statements by relatives whose parents or children were been detained, pre-eminently prominent intellectuals are lately targeted and detained by Chinese authorities. For instance, the Uighur scholar Mutällip Sidiq Qahiri was arrested in 2018. The scholar, who is suffering from a heart condition, had been doing research on the Uighur language and written 20 books, among them seven on Uighur names. He is a member of the Chinese Communist Party. He had been an editor of the scholarly magazine of University of Kashgar. The University of Kashgar, as it is called since 2015, previously had been the Kashgar Pedagogical College. Qahiri had been the editor between 1991 and 2010. Since 1993, he had been a professor for the Uighur language. He has never been against the Chinese state and has never done anything to harm the Chinese state. Nevertheless, the Chinese authorities are treating him as a criminal.

The United Front Work Department acknowledged the existence of the camps in August 2018. They claim their actions to be “promoting social stability”. As they pursue for total control the XUAR, officials resort to high-end surveillance technology.

The province Ningxia has signed an agreement willing to learn from the XUAR. Ningxia is home to the Hui, another Muslim minority. Similar actions to those in Xinjiang have already been taken as Hui people are not allowed to attend mosques and to participate in religious activities anymore, too.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the U.N. Human Rights Council to urge the Government of the People’s Republic of China:

- To immediately dissolve the illegal, so-called re-education centers, to free all Uighur, Kazakh and Kyrgyz detainees and to reunite them with their family.

- To stop the re-education program with its mandatory day or evening sessions on political training.
 - To ensure the respect of basic human rights for all citizens of XUAR enshrined in Chinese law and international human rights conventions.
 - To guarantee U.N. human rights experts unfettered access to re-education centers and to provide free coverage for independent international journalists.
 - To provide data of how many people are detained and which measures are planned in Ningxia.
 - To stop systematically extinguishing the Uighur culture and language.
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