**Anti-Slavery International submission to the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief: Report on Anti-Muslim Hatred and Discrimination**

1. **Introduction**

Anti-Slavery International, founded in 1839, is committed to eradicating all forms of slavery throughout the world. This submission responds to Section 3 of the Special Rapporteur's call for input, *Social attitude, hate speech, attacks and violence against Muslims*, sub-question *State-sponsored violence against Muslims[[1]](#footnote-1).*It provides evidence of state-imposed forced labour in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Uyghur Region), where the Chinese government has detained an estimated 1 to 1.8 million Uyghurs and other Turkic and Muslim-majority peoples in a state programme to repress the ethnic and religious identity of these populations. This involves both detainee labour inside internment camps (so called re-education camps) and multiple forms of involuntary labour at workplaces across the Uyghur Region and in other parts of China to which Uyghur workers are transported.

1. **Section 3. Social attitude, hate speech, attacks and violence against Muslims – focus on State-sponsored violence against Muslims**

The evidence for forced labour and its use in supply chains throughout the Uyghur Region and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) has been documented by a range of independent think tanks, scholars and non-governmental organisations through refugee accounts, satellite imagery, and government records. The forced labour system is maintained through an extensive digital and personal surveillance apparatus.[[2]](#footnote-2) Although an exact number of how Uyghurs and other Muslim and Turkic-majority peoples have been detained and are forced to work is unknown, the current estimate is 1 to 1.8 million people.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The widespread use of state-imposed forced labour as a means of social control by the Government of China creates significant risk of forced labour at all workplaces, industrial or agricultural, in the Uyghur Region.[[4]](#footnote-4) The Government is also transferring workers to other parts of China where they work in export factories under conditions that also strongly indicate forced labour.[[5]](#footnote-5) The ways by which forced labour is imposed, and the specific links to the textile industry, are described below:

* **Coerced labour of the rural poor in the ‘poverty alleviation programme’;** The Government plans to have at least 1 million workers in the textile and garment sectors, with at least 650,000 coming from the Uyghur region by 2023.[[6]](#footnote-6) These numbers would mean at least 5% of the Uyghur population in the Region would be working in the textile and garment sector within three years.[[7]](#footnote-7) To ensure that these individuals have the ‘skills’ required for the factory jobs, they are mandated to go through training. Although these centralised training centres are not directly part of the reeducation camps, the education, infrastructure, and setup is similar to that of those camps complete with high fences, police watchtowers and barbed wire.[[8]](#footnote-8) Resistance to attend these training centres is seen as a sign of ‘extremism’ and can result in being sent to a reeducation camp.[[9]](#footnote-9) According to interviews with ex-detainees, minority workers who are part of the ‘poverty alleviation’ plan were threatened with internment if they refused to work in a garment or textile factory.[[10]](#footnote-10) These interviews also revealed that some of the poor people of rural areas who were forced to work in these garment and textile factories were also mandated to live in dormitories and were transported in the same buses as former detainees.[[11]](#footnote-11)
* **Forced labour of current and ex-detainees, including in internment camps;** In a separate but parallel policy to China’s public poverty alleviation plan, the government has also enacted a public re-education policy that involves internment with some vocational training, indoctrination, and finally release to factories in nearby industrial parks or camp factories.[[12]](#footnote-12) According to the Government’s own documents, “*After they [detainees] leave [the camps], the documents stipulate, every effort should be made to get them jobs*.” [[13]](#footnote-13) The exact number of former detainees who have been coerced into working in a factory is not known, but estimates based on interviews and government statements is at least 100,000 former detainees are forced to work in garment and textile factories.[[14]](#footnote-14) Video reports from September 2020 from the Aksu province also reported on former detainees being forced to work in the textile sector.[[15]](#footnote-15) The government of Kashgar (a prefecture in the Uyghur Region), stated that it would send 100,000 former detainees who had completed ‘vocational training’ (time in a detention center) to work in factories, which would be 20% of the Uyghur population of Kashgar.[[16]](#footnote-16)
* **Prison labour*;*** Some Uyghurs and other Turkic and Muslim-majority peoples are within the traditional prison population rather than in the internment system discussed above. In 2017 and 2018, over 230,000 people were sentenced by the courts in Uyghur Region, often with prison terms of five years or more, which was higher than any other period or region in China.[[17]](#footnote-17) The Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC), for example, administers its own prison system and factories.[[18]](#footnote-18) XPCC —a quasi-governmental paramilitary organisation—is reported to force its own prison population to conduct commercial activities, mainly in cotton harvesting and production.[[19]](#footnote-19) XPCC was the enterprise to establish Xinjiang’s cotton industry, and some estimates suggest that XPCC produces almost 34% of China’s overall cotton output through its forced prison labour.[[20]](#footnote-20)[[21]](#footnote-21) Of note here, the Citizen Power Initiative (CPI) indicates that starting in 2017, the prison population of Uyghur and other Turkic and/or Muslim people increased dramatically as the central government clamped down.[[22]](#footnote-22)
* **State-owned enterprises and private companies accepting subsidies to use forced labourers from the Uyghur Region:**The government offers incentives to Chinese-owned companies to incorporate the Uyghur population into their operations.[[23]](#footnote-23) The Xinjiang government has offered subsidies and inducements to encourage Chinese-owned companies to invest and build factories within the ‘vocational training compounds,’ right next to such compounds.[[24]](#footnote-24) Additionally, according to CSIS, companies have been encouraged to build ‘satellite’ factories in villages to ensure that they are able to control and coerce every member to work.[[25]](#footnote-25) This programme links to the Government’s pairing programme, in which mainland Chinese provinces are partnered with specific regions of the Uyghur Region.[[26]](#footnote-26)
* **Forced labour transfers:** According to reports, at least 80,000 Uyghurs and other Muslim and Turkic-majority peoples were transferred from the Uyghur Region to factories in eastern and central China.[[27]](#footnote-27) This is part of a state-sponsored transfer–of–labour scheme that goes beyond just the cotton and garment manufacturing sector, marketed as ‘Xinjiang Aid.’[[28]](#footnote-28) This ‘Xinjiang Aid’ scheme allows companies to participate in two ways: (1) opening up satellite factories inside the Uyghur Region (see above) or (2) hiring Uyghur workers for their factories located outside Uyghur Region.[[29]](#footnote-29) This is an expansion of the ‘poverty alleviation’ and ‘re-education’ programs discussed above.[[30]](#footnote-30) The isolation, surveillance, and monitoring of these workers all indicate forced labour as defined by the ILO.[[31]](#footnote-31) These transfers appear to have continued even during pandemic in periods of lockdown, putting Uyghurs at risk of contracting the virus.[[32]](#footnote-32)

The UN Special Procedures have spoken out consistently since 2018 about the range of rights violations in the Uyghur Region, including by raising concerns about the legal framework[[33]](#footnote-33); the use of arbitrary detention and alleged application of the death penalty without fair trial guarantees[[34]](#footnote-34); and the extensive use of surveillance to monitor, track and detain Uyghurs and other Turkic and Muslim-majority peoples.[[35]](#footnote-35)

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) also identified key concerns with the treatment of ethnic and religious minorities in China. In its Concluding Observations 2018, CERD raised concerns about ‘*the detention of large number of ethnic Uighurs [sic] and other Muslim minorities, held incommunicado and often for long periods, without being charged or tried, under the pretext of countering religious extremism’*. The Committee specifically called on the Government to take urgent steps to halt the use of extra-legal detention (para 42a), to release those detained in the ‘re-education centres’ (para 42b), and to provide the number of persons detained, the grounds for detention, the conditions in the centres, and the content of the training or political curriculum used in the centres (para 42h).[[36]](#footnote-36) The Government’s responses[[37]](#footnote-37), in our view, failed to meaningfully respond to any of the concerns raised; the Committee’s formal assessment according to the follow-up procedure is pending publication as of this date.

1. **Section 5**. **Good practice in identifying and tackling anti-Muslim hatred, undertaken by civil society and international organisations:**

Anti-Slavery International is a member of the Steering Committee of the [Coalition to End Forced Labour in the Uyghur Region](https://enduyghurforcedlabour.org/). This Coalition has been established to call on brands and retailers to exit the Uyghur Region at every level of their supply chain, urge national governments to strengthen and enforce existing laws prohibiting trade in goods produced using forced labour, and to adopt and implement binding laws requiring human rights due diligence in supply chains, and to work with multilateral organisations to use their mechanisms to end forced labour in the Uyghur Region.

Anti-Slavery International recommends the following measures to address the ongoing forced labour of Uyghurs and other Turkic and Muslim-majority peoples, and to end the risk of corporate complicity in this forced labour:

* *To Governments*
  + Introduce laws mandating companies to undertake human rights due diligence to identify and cease all linkages to Uyghur forced labour in line with the corporate responsibility to respect human rights as defined by the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.
  + Introduce regulation prohibiting the import of goods made in whole or in part with products produced in the Uyghur Region.
  + Introduce sanctions on individuals and companies complicit in forced labour of Uyghurs and other Turkic and Muslim-majority peoples.
  + Support demands to the Chinese Government to allow immediate, unfettered and meaningful access to the Uyghur Region for independent observers.
* *To businesses*
  + Urgently commit to the steps laid out in the Coalition to End Uyghur Forced Labour’s “[Call to action](https://enduyghurforcedlabour.org/call-to-action/) on human rights abuses in the Uyghur Region in the apparel and textiles sector” to seek to end all linkages to Uyghur forced labour in their supply chains:
    - Stop sourcing cotton, yarn, textiles, and finished products from the Uyghur Region.
    - Cut ties with companies implicated in forced labour – those that have operations in the Uyghur region and have accepted government subsidies and/or government-supplied labour at these operations.
    - Prohibit any supplier factories located outside of the Uyghur Region from using workers supplied through the Chinese government's forced labour transfer program targeting Uyghur and other Turkic Muslim-majority ethnic groups.
    - Note: Taking the actions listed above does not preclude brands from sourcing clothing from elsewhere in China, as long as cotton or yarn from the Uyghur Region is not used to make the clothing and as long as suppliers are not using forced Uyghur and other Turkic and Muslim labour.
  + Although targeted at the garment and textile sector, these steps are transferable to other industries with comparable supply chains, for example electronics.
* *To the UN:*
  + Urgently create an independent international mechanism to address the Chinese government’s human rights violations.
  + Use all interactions with Chinese authorities to insist that the government comply with its international human rights obligations.
  + The UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights to undertake steps to enter into a formal dialogue, including through the Communications procedure, with Chinese and global brands whose manufacturing or supply chains may be linked to forced or coerced labour in the Uyghur Region.

1. Section 3 Social attitude, hate speech, attacks and violence against Muslims. Relevant issue: *State-sponsored violence against Muslims, for example genocide, mass killings, mass internment, reproductive control, forced displacement, etc* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “Zenz, *Wash Brains, Cleanse Hearts*.”; Amy Lehr and Mariefaye Bechrakis, Connecting the Dots in Xinjiang: Forced Labor, Forced Assimilation, and Western Supply Chains, October 2019, p. 1, hereinafter “Lehr, Connecting the Dots.” Available online at <https://www.csis.org/analysis/connecting-dots-xinjiang-forced-labor-forced-assimilation-and-western-supply-chains> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Zenz, *Wash Brains, Cleanse Hearts*, supran. 23 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Chris Buckley and  Austin Ramzy, *Inside China’s Push to Turn Muslim Minorities Into an Army of Workers*, NY Times, Feb. 17, 2020, *online at* <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/30/world/asia/china-xinjiang-muslims-labor.html>; Adrian Zenz, *Xinjiang’s New Slavery*, Foreign Policy, Dec. 11, 2019, online at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/12/11/cotton-china-uighur-labor-xinjiang-new-slavery/>; CECC Hearing, “Forced Labor, Mass Internment, and Social Control in Xinjiang,” October 17, 2019. <https://www.cecc.gov/events/hearings/forced-labor-mass-internment-and-social-control-in-xinjiang> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. ASPI Report; Washington Post, *China compels Uighurs to work in shoe factory that supplies Nike*, Feb. 29, 2020. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/gdpr-consent/?next_url=https%3a%2f%2fwww.washingtonpost.com%2fworld%2fasia_pacific%2fchina-compels-uighurs-to-work-in-shoe-factory-that-supplies-nike%2f2020%2f02%2f28%2febddf5f4-57b2-11ea-8efd-0f904bdd8057_story.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Lehr, *Connecting the Dots*, supran. 11 at p. 5..; Adrian Zenz, *Beyond the Camps: Beijing's Grand Scheme of Forced Labor, Poverty Alleviation and Social Control in Xinjiang*,” July 2019 at 13-14, hereinafter “Zenz, Beyond the Camps.” Online at<https://www.cecc.gov/sites/chinacommission.house.gov/files/documents/Beyond%20the%20Camps%20CECC%20testimony%20version%20%28Zenz%20Oct%202019%29.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Id.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Zenz, *Beyond the Camps*, supran. 33 at p 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Id. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Lehr, *Connecting the Dots*, supran. 11 at p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Id. at 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Zenz, *Beyond the Camps*, supran. 33 at p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. The Associated Press, “*Secret documents reveal how China mass detention camps work*,” November 25, 2019 <https://apnews.com/4ab0b341a4ec4e648423f2ec47ea5c47>. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Lehr, *Connecting the Dots*, *supra* n. 11 at p. 8; Deutsche Welle, Exclusive: China's systematic tracking, arrests of Uighurs exposed in new Xinjiang leak, Feb 17, 2020, online at<https://www.dw.com/en/exclusive-chinas-systematic-tracking-arrests-of-uighurs-exposed-in-new-xinjiang-leak/a-52397824> supra, n. 45 (“In dozens of cases, DW has found reference to a system of forced labor in factories. One such case of prolonged internment at a factory involves a man detained in May 2018 for contacting his brother, who had fled to Turkey".)

    According to the document, the detainee therefore "poses a certain level of danger to society." The recommendation by the "community" is for him to "remain in a factory in the re-education camps."). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Radio Free Asia, “*Uyghur Women Released From Camps Work Long Hours For Low Pay in Forced Labor Scheme”,* October 1, 2020 <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/labor-10012020174034.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Lehr, *Connecting the Dots*, *supra* n. 11 at p. 8; Deutsche Welle, “*Exclusive: China's systematic tracking, arrests of Uighurs exposed in new Xinjiang leak”,* Feb 17, 2020, online at<https://www.dw.com/en/exclusive-chinas-systematic-tracking-arrests-of-uighurs-exposed-in-new-xinjiang-leak/a-52397824> [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. “China’s Prisons Swell After Deluge of Arrests Engulfs Muslims,” *NY Times,* Aug. 31, 2019, online at<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/31/world/asia/xinjiang-china-uighurs-prisons.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. *Id.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. *Id.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Lehr, C*onnecting the Dots*, supran. 11 at p. 8 (Citing Xiang Bo, “Xinjiang’s major cotton base reports record output in 2018,” Xinhua, <https://perma.cc/YX7T-6VQS>). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. The most comprehensive research on the prison system in the Uyghur Region comes from the Citizen Power Initiative: Lianchao Han, *Cotton: The Fabric Full of Lies: A report on forced and prison labor in Xinjiang, China, and the nexus to global supply chains* (CPIFC Monograph Series Book 2) (p. 4). Citizen Press. p. 14. Available via Kindle at <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Cotton-Fabric-report-Xinjiang-Monograph-ebook/dp/B07VSJHNGZ> [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Id. at p. 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Lehr, *Connecting the Dots*, supra n. 11 at p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. *Id.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. *Id.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. The US Government has provided a mapping of the pairing programme in the *Xinjiang Supply Chain Business Advisory* issued July 1 2020. <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/126/20200701_xinjiang_advisory.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. ASPI Report, supran. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. *Id.* at 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. *Id* at 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. *Id.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. ILO Indicators of Forced Labour, available at <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_203832.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Radio Free Asia, “*Xinjiang Authorities Sending Uyghurs to Work in China’s Factories, Despite Coronavirus Risks*”, February 27 2020, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/work-02272020160853.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Namely, the Counter-terrorism Law and XUAR Regional Implementing Regulations in November 2019, JOL CHN 18/2019, and the XUAR Regulation on De-extremification, JOL CHN 21/2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Namely, the case of Uyghur scholar Tashpolat Tiyip, JUA CHN 21/2019 [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. JAL CHN 14/2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrfimination, *Concluding observations on the combined fourteenth to seventeenth periodic reports of China (including Hong Kong, China and Macao, China*), CERD/C/CHN/CO/14-17, 30 August 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Published 8 October 2019, available at <https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Countries.aspx?CountryCode=CHN&Lang=EN> [↑](#footnote-ref-37)