

Genocide alert: New evidence shows that Uyghurs subjected to the crime of crimes

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Right on the heels of a major advocacy victory for the Uyghur crisis — the signing of the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act into law — new evidence suggests that the Uyghurs of China are being subjected to not only crimes against humanity, but also genocide.

The Chinese government is implementing draconian measures to severely slash birth rates among the Uyghurs as a means of curbing its Muslim population. This sweeping campaign of limiting births through subjugation, severe rights deprivation and terror joins an ever-increasing list of other heinous abuses designed to bring about this ethnoreligious minority group's assimilation into the "Chinese Nation-Race", and perhaps even...its erasure.

Two complementary reports, released on Monday, June 29, by the Associated Press and China scholar Adrian Zenz, document the Chinese government's systematic campaign to slash birth rates among Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and other Turkic Muslims in East Turkistan (also known as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region or XUAR), including via the widespread application of forced pregnancy tests, birth control, sterilization and abortion on hundreds of thousands of Uyghur women. Birth rates in Xinjiang have plummeted by over 60% amid this climate of terror, even as those of Han Chinese have begun to rise.

These reports reveal that since 2017, the Chinese government has implemented a variety of heinous population control measures, ranging from "dragnet-style" investigations into Uyghur families to mandatory pregnancy checks and the forced insertion of intrauterine devices. Local government directives urged officials to "contain illegal births and lower fertility levels." Mounting evidence suggests that during night raids, officials and security forces looked for hidden children and pregnant women. They also fined and detained parents of three or more children and forced abortions and sterilization on Uyghur women. The AP report laid bare that "even while the use of IUDs and sterilization has fallen nationwide, it is rising sharply in Xinjiang."

"Having too many children" is among the most common reasons many Uyghurs are sent to sprawling internment camps scattered throughout the Xinjiang region. The population control measures are backed by mass detention as both a threat and punishment for failure to comply. Local doctors suspected of helping Uyghur women are also detained. The children are ripped from their parents' arms and placed in government-run orphanages, where they are stripped of their Uyghur identities.

The campaign to reduce Uyghur birth rates is but one facet of a comprehensive state-orchestrated assault on the Uyghurs designed to purge them of their faith and identity. Up to 2 million Uyghurs are subjected to forced political and religious "re-education" in overcrowded concentration-style camps, where they potentially face a litany of other abuses including rape, organ harvesting and extrajudicial killings. They are also forced to labor in factories, many of which supply goods to American companies. Those still "free" in Xinjiang live in a climate of oppressive fear, with their every move tracked by a vast digital surveillance apparatus. The most seemingly innocuous "violations," such as growing a beard or making a phone call to a relative abroad could land Uyghurs inside the camps.

Jewish World Watch has said that the large-scale arbitrary detention program, removal of children and systematic destruction of cultural heritage constitute crimes against humanity under international law. These widespread, rights-effacing population control measures take the matter one step further, invoking the possibility that not just cultural but full-blown genocide is underway. Indeed, implementing efforts to prevent births within a national, ethnical, racial or religious group can amount to genocide, when done with the intent to destroy said group, in whole or in part.

Article II of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide lists five enumerated acts that — when perpetrated with the requisite intent — constitute genocide. One of these prohibited acts is “imposing measures intended to prevent births” within a targeted group. Adrian Zenz’s research demonstrates that Beijing set an “unprecedented near-zero population growth target” for the Uyghur region for 2020. The CCP’s 2019 campaign documents reveal past and future plans to mass sterilize or forcibly implement intrusive birth control procedures on at least 80 percent of rural Uyghur women in southern Xinjiang. Zenz concludes that government documents offer compelling evidence of China’s intent to subject the Uyghurs to “demographic genocide.”

The “intent to destroy” is what sets genocide apart from all other mass atrocity crimes. While Beijing has claimed its multifarious campaigns against the Uyghurs are motivated by de-radicalization and assimilation, something far more nefarious may be undergirding these abuses. Indeed, the Chinese government’s unconscionable, fear-based tactics of population control reveal a level of dehumanization and othering consistent with genocidal regimes since time immemorial. The eradication of a protected group need not occur in one fell swoop in order for it to constitute genocide. International tribunals have recognized that “slow death” via a vast array of systematic and widespread abuses over time can also amount to genocide. By simultaneously shrinking the Uyghur population and making life for Uyghurs intolerable on every level, Beijing may be aiming for just that.

The United States and international community must respond immediately to ensure this eventual erasure never comes to pass. In response to the reports, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called on the Chinese Communist Party to “immediately end these horrific practices” and asked, “all nations to join the United States in demanding an end to these dehumanizing abuses.”

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom called on the State Department “to investigate whether the Chinese authorities’ deliberate and systematic attempt to genetically reducing the Turkic Muslim population in Xinjiang meets the legal definition for genocide as contemplated in the Genocide Convention. We also call on the U.S. government to introduce a resolution at the U.N. on these crimes that the Chinese Communist Party has committed against the Uyghurs and other Muslims in China.”

Fifty-one UN Special Procedures mandate holders also issued a joint statement calling for “the establishment of an impartial and independent United Nations mechanism” to monitor and report on the grave human rights situation in China. The Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China, a group of European, Australian, North American, and Japanese politicians from across the political spectrum also demanded an independent U.N. investigation, issuing a statement that “the world cannot remain silent in the face of unfolding atrocities.”

While global expressions of outrage are important for exposing China's shocking eugenics campaign against the Uyghurs, words alone are not enough. All of these calls to action must be implemented immediately, and more. While passage of the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act is indeed a landmark achievement for the Uyghur cause, it marks the beginning, not the end of efforts to truly hold Beijing accountable for its highly coordinated atrocities that target every possible level of Uyghur life. The awe-inspiring scale and barbarity of these abuses make them attacks on humanity as a whole, not just the Uyghurs. Thus, the United States and international community must remain vigilant and utilize all possible channels to force Beijing to stop.

Each day seems to bring reports of further violations. On the same day that the New York Times revealed that China was stalking Uyghurs far earlier than previously believed, a shipment of Xinjiang products made with human hair was seized by U.S. Customs and Border Protection. China is targeting the Uyghurs from all angles, across all sectors, and the global response to these atrocities must adopt the same tactics. We need to keep pushing to ensure that the US government follows through on the promises in the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act and implements Global Magnitsky Sanctions against the architects of these atrocities immediately. We must simultaneously push for the adoption of the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act to ensure the products of China's abuses do not make it onto our shores, and to hit China where it can actually hurt: trade. Only by being relentless in our attack on these violations can we hope to bring this vicious machinery of rights deprivation and dehumanization to an end.

<https://www.jww.org/conflict-areas/china/genocide-china-uyghurs/>