

China Suppression Of Uighur Minorities Meets U.N. Definition Of Genocide, Report Says

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NPR's Scott Simon speaks with China expert Adrian Zenz about his research uncovering evidence of birth prevention and mass female sterilization of Uighur Muslims in China.

SCOTT SIMON, HOST:

A new report in Foreign Policy says that China's suppression of Uighurs, Kazakhs and other chiefly Muslim ethnic minorities in northwest China now meets the United Nations definition of genocide, mass sterilization, forced abortions and mandatory birth control part of a campaign that has swept up more than 1.5 million people and what researcher Adrian Zenz calls probably the largest incarceration of an ethnoreligious minority since the Holocaust. Adrian Zenz joins us from Minneapolis. Mr. Zenz, thanks so much for being with us.

ADRIAN ZENZ: Thank you.

SIMON: Those words are stunning. Outline for us, if you can, what you found.

ZENZ: I was able to uncover dedicated policies by Beijing in the region to systematically suppress birthrates and depress population growth. I uncovered evidence that the Uighurs are subject to internment in camps if they violate birth control policies, have too many children. I also uncovered that there's tools to implement intrauterine contraceptive devices and other intrusive surgical birth prevention mechanisms in at least 80% of the targeted women.

SIMON: Eighty percent.

ZENZ: That's the minimum goal for 2019, but I personally believe that the actual was closer probably to 90%.

SIMON: It is notoriously difficult to do research on the Chinese government, and specifically their policies on the Uighur population. How did you conduct the research? Do you trust the data?

ZENZ: I do trust the data, which, as before, comes from different types of Chinese government documents, firstly from the Xinjiang National Health Commission, whose website has subsequently gone offline since the publication of my report, from local prefecture government websites and from county websites. We're talking budgets with very detailed target indicator figures, reports, policy documents.

SIMON: People need to be careful using the word genocide. Why do you think it's justified and important to use it now?

ZENZ: I have long argued that the atrocity in the region is a cultural genocide, not a literal genocide. I do continue to believe that, generally speaking, the Chinese government does not intend to physically eradicate the Uighurs and Kazakhs, just to integrate, subjugate, dominate and assimilate them. However, this is coupled with

a policy of ethnoracial domination, as the government has brought millions of Han Chinese settlers in the regions with promises of high salaries, jobs and free housing.

The reason why now this has changed - we do need to probably call it a genocide - is quite simply because the evidence now, for the first time, very specifically meets one of the five criteria set forth by the United Nations Convention for the Punishment and Prevention of the Crime of Genocide from 1948, which specifically says the suppression of birth.

SIMON: The U.N. has said that up to 1.5 million Uighurs are in internment camps in China. China says this is to contain the threat of terrorism and to reeducate people in the camps to become better Chinese citizens. Behind those statistics are real human lives that have been upended. I wonder what some of the stories you've been able to discover have reached into you the most.

ZENZ: Stories that are among the most harrowing, of course, are stories of abuse, stories of women being caught up by the police and, as they're being brought to the internment camp, the first thing is that they're told, you're going to go on the surgery table, and we're going to put an intrauterine contraceptive device into your body, because that's standard policy for women who are put into a camp. Other women report of forced sterilization, of abuse, even accounts of rape.

SIMON: A word like genocide is also supposed to provoke the world to act. What do you believe should or can be done, Mr. Zenz?

ZENZ: I think China needs to face consequences by exclusion or sanctioning from multilateral institutions, either political or possibly economic sanctions, given that we also have a situation of forced labor. I think the international community got to start to think real hard how, with what kind of actions it's going to back up its professed and supposed moral values.

SIMON: Adrian Zenz is a senior fellow in China studies at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation. Mr. Zenz, thanks so much for being with us.

ZENZ: Thank you.

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