

CHINA HAS SEPARATED THOUSANDS OF CHILDREN FROM THEIR PARENTS



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UYGHURS IN TURKEY PROTEST AGAINST 'GENOCIDE' IN CHINA'S XINJIANG

Hundreds gather in Istanbul as Foreign Minister Wang Yi does vaccine diplomacy in Ankara

The Uyghur diaspora in Turkey marked Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's visit to the country on Thursday with a large protest in Istanbul against Beijing's alleged repression of the Muslim minority in Xinjiang.

Hundreds of people braved chilly weather to rally at Istanbul's Beyazit square as well as near China's consulate-general at gatherings organized by 26 non-government organizations focusing on Uyghur rights.

“We are here say ‘Stop’ to the genocide China is executing against people of East Turkistan and convey our concern regarding Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi’s visit to Turkey,” the groups said in a joint statement delivered in Istanbul and the capital Ankara.

Wang is visiting Turkey as part of a six-country tour of the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia and Iran. The tour comes days after

the U.S., the U.K., Canada and the European Union slapped sanctions on Chinese officials accused of involvement in human rights abuses of the Uyghur population in Xinjiang -- allegations vehemently denied by Beijing, which claims it is fighting domestic terrorism and separatism.

Around 50,000 Uyghurs are estimated to live in Turkey -- the diaspora largest outside of Central Asia. Uyghurs share ethnic, linguistic and religious bonds with the Turkish people, who have shown a deep sympathy for their plight.

Turkey is vocal on the human rights violations against Uyghurs in Xinjiang, while many Middle Eastern nations are largely silent on the issue. Even so, Turkey has toned





down its criticism of China over the past two years.

After talks with Wang, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu tweeted that they had “discussed the potential of economic cooperation with China and “will enhance our cooperation on fight against pandemic and vaccine”

Turkey “conveyed our sensitivity and thoughts on Uyghur Turks,” Cavusoglu added.

The administration of President Tayyip Erdogan has a China quandary. Turkey wants to forge strong ties with Beijing and attract investment, financing and Chinese vaccines against coronavirus, but it does not want relations with Western countries to fray.

“As a country that is located in the heart of Africa, Asia and Europe, we cannot afford to turn our back on either the East or the West,” Erdogan said at his party’s congress on Wednesday.



“It is not easy to develop balanced, coherent and long-term cooperation with countries that are in competition or even in conflict with one another at the same time,” he said. “However, Turkey, with its geographical position, economic interests and inclusive foreign policy vision, has the power and sagacity to achieve this.”

Turkey is currently suffering a third wave of the coronavirus pandemic, recording almost 30,000 cases on Wednesday.

Turkey’s health minister Fahrettin Koca said on Feb. 10 that Turkey has signed two contracts with China’s Sinovac Biotech for procuring a total of 100 million doses of vaccine by May.

The first 50 million doses were supposed to arrive by the end of February. On that day, he also said Turkey had received 15 million doses and then Turkey would stop giving updates on the timing and volume of upcoming batches as “it is causing problems to the supplier company and the country of origin as their own citizens are also seeking vaccines.”

Turkey has administered 14.4 million doses of Sinovac vaccine so far, but a significant slowdown in vaccinations in recent days has caused speculation that the supply from China may have reached a bottleneck. On Thursday night, Koca reversed course and said that Turkey had received around 16.5 million doses of Sinovac vaccine so far, and that



bulk materials for another 10 million doses had arrived the same day, taking the total to more than 26 million.

The news coincided with Wang's visit, suggesting China's vaccine diplomacy was at work. Cavusoglu also took Wang to a photography exhibition on the coronavirus vaccine cooperation between Turkey and China, which showed president Erdogan receiving his shot and Turkish scientists conducting Phase III clinical trials for the Sinovac vaccine.

The minister recently pushed back a target of inoculating 50 million people by the end of May to "before autumn." Opposition parties have attacked the delays and seemingly contradictory statements from the government.

A few hours before Wang's arrival, Koca tweeted that the first 1.4 million doses of Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines arrived out of 5 million doses to be received until end of March. He said in February that Turkey had also signed up to for an option to receive 30 million Pfizer/BioNTech doses.



Some observers have suggested that the arrival of the Western jabs will strengthen Turkey's hand against a slowdown of vaccine supply from China.

The arrival of first Sinovac batches also faced delays that were only be solved by a phone call from Cavusoglu to Wang at the end of last year.

A few days before the first batch of Chinese vaccines was due to be sent to Turkey, Beijing unexpectedly announced it had ratified an extradition treaty with Turkey, which was signed in 2017 and is awaiting Turkish parliamentary approval. The prospect of such a treaty is causing great concern among the Uyghur diaspora in Turkey, especially those who have not obtained Turkish citizenship.

Opposition pressure and a fall in public support for Erdogan has prevented his administration from putting the treaty on the agenda of a parliament commission for debate.

“We are disturbed by the extradition treaty between Turkey and China, which is defined by Chinese media as a legal trap toward the people of East Turkistan living in Turkey,” the Uyghur groups said in the statement. “In the name of people of East Turkistan, we always strongly demand Turkish parliament to reject the treaty.”

Both Turkish and Chinese authorities denied vaccines are being traded for Uyghurs. And the prospect of tough questioning appears to have prevented the two foreign ministers from holding a press conference.

Sinan Tavsan, Nikkei Staff Writer



US AND CANADA FOLLOW EU AND UK IN SANCTIONING CHINESE OFFICIALS OVER XINJIANG

Sanctions over treatment of Uyghurs mark first time for three decades UK or EU has punished China for human rights abuses

Britain and the EU have taken joint action with the US and Canada to impose parallel sanctions on senior Chinese officials involved in the mass internment of Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang province in the first such western action against Beijing since Joe Biden took office.

The move also marked the first time in three decades that the UK or the EU had punished China for human rights abuses, and both will now be working hard to contain the potential political and economic fallout. China hit back immediately, blacklisting MEPs, European diplomats and thinktanks.

The US and Canada also imposed sanctions on several senior Chinese officials as part of the coordinated pressure campaign.

The UK foreign secretary, Dominic Raab, said China's treatment of the Uyghur minority was "the largest mass detention of an

ethnic and religious group since the second world war". Evidence of repression in Xinjiang "is clear as it is sobering", he said.

The sanctions will be imposed immediately and include travel bans and asset freezes on four officials, Raab told MPs.

"Amid growing international condemnation, [China] continues to commit genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang," said the US secretary of state, Antony Blinken. "We will continue to stand with our allies around the world in calling for an immediate end to the PRC's crimes and for justice for the many victims."

The Chinese ambassador to the EU, Zhang Ming, had given advance warning that there would be countermeasures, including against those organisations spreading "lies" about the situation in Xinjiang. China also said it was sanctioning 10 EU individuals and four entities. The German Green politician Reinhard Bütikofer, an active voice in the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC), a group that attempts to reform the approach of democratic countries to China, was among five MEPs sanctioned. Two academics were also targeted.

In a statement, China said: “The Chinese side urges the EU side to reflect on itself, face squarely the severity of its mistake, and redress it. It must stop lecturing others on human rights and interfering in their internal affairs. It must end the hypocritical practice of double standards.”

Guy Verhofstadt MEP, the chair of the conference on the future of Europe, said: “China just killed the EU-China Investment Agreement by sanctioning the people criticising slave labour [and] genocide in Xinjiang. How could we ever trust them to improve the human rights situation of the Uyghurs if they simply call it ‘fake news’?”

Activists and UN experts say at least 1 million Muslims are detained in camps in Xinjiang. China denies rights abuses and says its camps provide vocational training and are needed to fight extremism.

The four Chinese officials sanctioned by the EU and the UK are: Zhu Hailun, the former secretary of the political affairs committee of Xinjiang, seen as the architect of the Uyghur internment program; Wang Junzheng,



the head of the Xinjiang production and construction corps; Chen Mingguo, director of Xinjiang’s public security bureau; and Wang Mingshan, a secretary to the Xinjiang autonomous region political committee.

The EU accused Chen of “arbitrary detentions and degrading treatment inflicted upon Uyghurs and people from other Muslim ethnic minorities, as well as systematic violations of their freedom of religion or belief”.



There was some criticism of the sanctions within the EU, with the Hungarian foreign minister, Péter Szijjártó, describing the step as pointless. Hungary has been eager to source vaccines from either Russia or China and has been aggressively wooed by the Chinese foreign service.

The EU is due shortly to sign a major investment deal with China that is intended to level the playing field, open up Chinese markets and provide some protection against forced labour.

Although the investment deal has yet to be ratified by the European parliament, Germany in particular will be concerned that the sanctions may destabilise economic relations with China.

The Labour party said Raab’s timing, hours after the EU acted and following months of Foreign Office resistance, showed that the

UK sheltering behind the EU. The UK has an sanctions regime independent from the EU's, but it waited for the EU to act before taking any measures itself to avoid being singled out for punishment by China, Labour suggested.

Neither the UK or EU has imposed sanctions against Chinese officials involved in the suppression of democratic elections in Hong Kong. The UK last week declared that China was in breach of the Sino-British joint declaration on Hong Kong as a result of the suppression of full elections, but has so far not taken any measures against the Chinese for their treatment of the former UK colony. The US has imposed sanctions on 24 officials connected with the new sovereignty laws.

Later on Monday Conservative rebels failed in their bid to prevent ministers signing trade agreements with countries implicated in genocide. The House of Commons voted 319 to 297 to disagree with a Lords amendment to the trade bill that would have established a parliamentary panel of judicial experts to de-

termine whether any proposed signatory to a trade agreement with the UK had committed genocide.

The measure is contained in the trade bill.

The UK shadow foreign secretary, Lisa Nandy, described the announcement of UK sanctions against China as “a grubby, cynical, last-ditch attempt to buy votes ahead of a backbench rebellion later today. The foreign secretary has repeatedly refused to sanction Chinese officials for more than two years and only now, after the US and EU have done so and he is facing defeat in the Commons, is he reluctantly forced to take action.”

“If anything sums up just how utterly inconsistent the government’s approach to China is, today the foreign secretary will apply sanctions to officials responsible for human rights abuses and in the same breath insist on the right to sign trade deals with countries that commit genocide.”





BEIJING'S CRACKDOWN IN XINJIANG HAS SEPARATED THOUSANDS OF CHILDREN FROM THEIR PARENTS, NEW REPORT CLAIMS. CNN FOUND TWO OF THEM

Xinjiang, China (CNN) It was supposed to be a routine trip home to Xinjiang for Mamutjan Abdurehim's wife and two children.

That was five years ago. He says he hasn't seen them since.

“**Mamutjan's wife Muherrem took their daughter and son from Malaysia back to the region in western China to get a new passport in December 2015. They remain trapped there, he said, caught up in the sweeping government crackdown against Muslim minorities that has reportedly seen up to 2 million people arbitrarily detained in vast camps across Xinjiang.**

China has denied the allegations of human rights abuses in the region, saying the camps are necessary to prevent religious extremism and terrorism.

Mamutjan said his family, who are ethnically Uyghur, are unable to leave China, while he would be at risk of being detained or imprisoned if he returned. He is now living in Adelaide, Australia.

This week, a CNN team tracked down Mamutjan's 10-year-old daughter Muhlise at her paternal grandparents' home in the city of Kashgar, in southern Xinjiang.

When asked if she has a message for her father, whom she hasn't spoken to since 2017, Muhlise began to cry. “I miss him,” she said.

When Mamutjan watched the video from his home in Adelaide, he struggled to fight back his tears.



“I can’t believe how tall (my daughter) is now ... What kind of country does this to innocent people?” he said.

In a new report released Thursday, Amnesty International estimated there may be thousands of Uyghur families like Mamutjan’s worldwide, parents and children who have been separated for years as a result of the Chinese government’s tightening grip on Xinjiang.

Under the leadership of the country’s all-powerful President Xi Jinping, Muslim minorities in Xinjiang have allegedly been subject to a government-engineered program of mass incarceration, forced indoctrination and even sterilization.

According to the Amnesty International report, some parents who fled the region in the early days of the crackdown have been

unable to reunite with their children. Others, like Mamutjan, found themselves on opposite sides of the ocean by accident, and now fear returning to Xinjiang.

Alkan Akad, a China researcher at Amnesty International, said the separation of parents and children isn’t all accidental. In some cases, it can be a deliberate tactic by authorities.

“The Chinese government wants to gain a leverage over the Uyghur population residing abroad, so that they would be able to stop them from engaging in activism and speaking out for their families and their relatives in Xinjiang,” said Akad, who authored the new report.

Speaking at a news briefing on March 15, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said accusations of human rights abuses in Xinjiang were “baseless and sensational.”

“Xinjiang-related issues are not human rights issues at all. They are in essence about countering violent terrorism, radicalization and separatism,” he said.

The Chinese government has not responded to CNN’s detailed questions on any of the



families mentioned in the article, or on the scale of the family separations between Uyghurs in Xinjiang and abroad.

“We did not deserve all of this”

The last time that Mamutjan said his family were all together -- him, his wife and their two children -- was in Malaysia in 2015.

Back then, Mamutjan said he was studying for his doctorate degree in Muslim World Studies, with a full scholarship, while his wife, Muherrrem was learning English. He said his daughter Muhlise was in kindergarten and “very active,” always running around everywhere, playing in parks and on the university campus. His son was only six months old.



“We were quite happy. We had no major troubles in life,” he said.

In December that year, Mamutjan said, his wife went back to Xinjiang with the two children. According to Mamutjan, she had lost her passport and the Chinese embassy in Malaysia had refused to issue her a new one unless she went back to her hometown of Kashgar.

Her passport was renewed in 2016, but Mamutjan said his wife wasn’t able to leave immediately due to some financial issues. Then, around the beginning of 2017, her travel documents and those of the children were confiscated by authorities.

A few months later, he said his wife vanished.



“I was in constant contact with my wife before April 15, 2017. We would chat daily, video chat with the children. And in the middle of April 2017, she promptly disappeared from (Chinese messaging app) WeChat,” he said.

“I called home the following day and my mom told me that she was gone for a short period of time, for a short study course ... And I realized that she was detained.”

Mamutjan said he hasn’t spoken to his wife since. Initially he was worried his children might have been sent to state-run orphanages, but later received social media videos showing them still living separately with their grandparents from each side.

Worried for his safety, Mamutjan said he left Malaysia and moved to Australia. There was no word from his family for years -- Uyghurs in Xinjiang can be placed in detention for only minor perceived infractions, including for contacting relatives abroad, according to leaked records seen by CNN, and it is common for families still in Xinjiang to cut communications.

Then in May 2019, Mamutjan said, he saw a social media video of his son, then age 4, excitedly shouting, “My mom has graduated!” The Chinese government insists the internment camps are “vocational training centers” and detainees are “students,” and Mamutjan took his son’s joyful cheering to mean his wife had been released.



Mamutjan said he called his parents, hoping the video was a sign the family's situation had improved, but when his mother answered, she told him there were Chinese Communist Party officials in the house and hung up.

With Mamutjan's permission, CNN journalists visited his parents' house in Kashgar unannounced to see if they could help locate his children -- and find out what happened to his wife.

His daughter Muhlise answered the door in a bright pink shirt and black pants. When showed a picture of Mamutjan, she said: "This is my Dad." She said she knew where her father was but seemed unwilling to talk about her mother's location.

After checking the answer with her grandparents, Muhlise said her mother was at her other grandmother's house but she "can't see her very often." The 10-year-old said she last saw her mother "a month or two ago." She said her brother was not with her but she saw him regularly.

CNN has asked the Chinese authorities about the mother's whereabouts, but has not received a reply. CNN also tried to visit the maternal grandparents' home in Kashgar, but the team couldn't find anyone there -- the door was bolted from the outside.

When Muhlise was asked if she wanted to be

reunited with her father, she said, "We can't go ... Our passports were confiscated."

After keeping her composure throughout the arrival of the CNN team, Muhlise began to break down when asked if she missed her father. "I don't have my mom here, and I don't have my dad here either ... I want to be reunited with them," she said. Hearing the question, her grandmother burst into tears.

Mamutjan said he believed the Chinese government was separating parents from their children as a way to intimidate and control Xinjiang's minority groups.

"It's basically a collective punishment for their ethnicity and religion and their unique cultural values," he said. "We did not deserve all of this immense suffering."

DESPERATE MEASURES

Some parents have resorted to desperate measures to try and be reunited with their children.

In 2016, Ablikim Mamtinin and his wife Mihriban Kader said they were forced to flee Xinjiang after she became pregnant with their sixth child. Under China's family planning policies, most families were only allowed to have one child until 2015, although rural ethnic minorities, including the Uyghurs, were permitted up to three in the region. A new policy implemented in 2017 said all urban couples in Xinjiang could have two children, while rural couples could have three.





With each new child, Mihriban and Ablikim said they had been paying fines and bribes to avoid punishments from the authorities. But in 2016, they said they were given a warning from local officials that their patience was at an end.

Ablikim said if they had stayed in Xinjiang any longer, his wife would have been forced to have an abortion. “They would have imprisoned me for having six children,” he said.

Mihriban and Ablikim managed to get tourist visas to Italy, giving them a chance to escape and start a new life in Europe. But their travel agent said they weren’t able to get visas for all five of their children -- only the youngest. Zumeryem, Yehya, Muhammad and Shehide would have to stay behind.

It was a heartbreaking choice for Mihriban and Ablikim. In the end, after leaving the four children with their grandparents, they left, hoping to be reunited as soon as possible once they were settled in Italy. But as the crackdown intensified in Xinjiang, their relatives in China stopped responding to their calls and emails. The parents heard some of their relatives were detained, which they be-

lieved was a result of their decision to leave for Italy. Soon it became impossible to contact anyone -- and they were unable to reach or learn the whereabouts of their four older children for almost four years.

When they finally reconnected in early 2020, and the parents heard how desperate the situation had become inside Xinjiang, they decided it was time to urgently take their children out of China. Visa clearance documents for the four siblings had been approved by the Italian government in 2019, but their passports were about to expire, and the parents say the authorities had been threatening to send the children to a state-owned orphanage.

In June 2020, directed remotely by their parents in Italy and a cousin in Canada, the four siblings -- then aged between 11 and 16 -- traveled from their remote village in Xinjiang all the way to Shanghai, a journey of more than 3,000 miles (4,800 kilometers), in an attempt to get their visas to rejoin their parents in Italy.

The four children took little money and no baggage to avoid suspicion from authorities along the way. But when they went to the Italian consulate in Shanghai to pick up their visas, the children said they were blocked by a Chinese security guard in the lobby of the building, where the consulate sits on the 19th floor.

Emails from consulate officials then directed the children to a different Italian visa of-



fice in Shanghai, which eventually rejected their visa application, saying they couldn't recognize the visa clearance documents, and minors needed to be accompanied by adults. They also said the four should apply in Beijing, which was under a Covid-19 lockdown at the time.

The Italian visa office and the Italian consulate in Shanghai have not responded to CNN's inquiries. The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome told CNN "we won't comment" on the case.

Eventually the cousin lost contact with the four siblings as two of them were making their way back to their hotel. Later, the parents say they were told by their children that they had been taken by officials and brought back to Xinjiang, where they were interrogated and then sent to a Covid-19 quarantine center for two weeks.

When they were released, the four children were put into a state-sponsored orphanage.

In the county seat of Payzawat, about an hour's drive from Kashgar, CNN attempted to locate the four siblings with their parents' permission, but local officials did not allow the team to visit the children. CNN was able to connect with Yehya, the second-oldest child, over a WeChat video call, as what he called a "teacher" off camera prompted the young man with what to say to journalists.

When asked if he wanted to be reunited with his parents, he said, "I do."



At one point, a voice on the other end of the phone told Yehya, "Tell them that you see your sister every day." When asked if he wanted to pass on any messages to his parents, the voice told him to say that he had "nothing" to say to his parents.

Since their failed escape attempt, when the children occasionally gain access to a phone in the orphanage, they can speak to their parents. Recently, the children sent a photograph of the four of them standing in front of barbed wire outside the facility. Another image they sent showed the siblings with a sign in Chinese, saying, "Dad, Mom, we miss you."

Despite the difficulties they face in retrieving their children, Mihriban and Ablikim said they aren't going to stop trying.

Now living in the small Italian town of Priverno, near Rome, the couple encourage their three youngest children to kiss the photos of their older siblings every day.

"I will never give up until I bring back my children safely and rejoin with my family," Mihriban said.

'I only want to bring my children back'

In a report released in March, more than 50 global experts in international law and Xinjiang named China's removal of children from Uyghur families as a violation of the UN Genocide Convention.

Under the convention, "forcibly transfer-

ring children of (an ethnic) group to another group” is considered as an act of genocide, if it is intended to destroy the protected group. The experts found that was in the case in Xinjiang.

The March report quoted a Chinese government document that showed, between 2017 and 2019, the number of children who had been separated from their families in Xinjiang and placed into state-run boarding schools had increased by 76.9%, from just under 500,000 to 880,500.

During a news conference in Beijing on March 7, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi denied there was any evidence of genocide occurring in Xinjiang, calling the allegations “preposterous.”

Uyghur historian Rian Thum, a senior lecturer at the University of Manchester and co-author on the March report, said the placement of children in state-run orphanages is part of a Chinese government strategy to try to assimilate the Uyghur population.

“This is a consistent widespread policy, they have special terminology for it,” Thum said. “We see it not just in one area or two, we can see it across the entirety of the Uyghur region.”

The Chinese government has denied attempting to erase Uyghur culture, saying it respects all of China’s ethnic minorities and religions. At a news conference in February, a spokesman for the Xinjiang government said there were a variety of reasons why Uyghurs overseas might have lost touch with their relatives back home, including that they may be “criminal suspects in police custody.”

“If you cannot get in touch with your relatives in Xinjiang, you should contact the nearest Chinese embassy or consulate. We will work with them to provide assistance,” he said.

But CNN’s interviews with both sets of children illustrated the tight security and immense pressure under which many Uyghurs in Xinjiang -- both old and young -- live every day.

In his video call with CNN, Mihriban and Ablikim’s son Yehya often repeated verbatim answers from the “teacher” next to him, glanced around nervously and looked off the camera.

Even when interviewed in their own home, Uyghurs appeared to watch their words. When Mamutjan’s daughter Muhlise was asked during CNN’s unannounced visit whether her mother had been sent to a “vocational training center,” she whispered to her paternal grandparents who told her in Uyghur to “say nothing like that.” “Say she is at home,” her grandfather said.

The interview was cut short when the family said local authorities came around looking for them.

Mamutjan said he was worried not just about his own son and daughter but a whole generation of Uyghur children who had grown up under the crackdown in Xinjiang.

“The Uyghur children in the orphanages ... are being brainwashed, (they) would be clueless about their culture, about their language, and their religious values,” he said.

For the four Ablikim siblings, their father is making a last-ditch, direct appeal to China’s leader Xi Jinping, who has recently called his government’s Xinjiang policy “completely correct,” to allow the children to fly to Italy and reunite with their parents.

“President of China,” Ablikim said. “I only want you to bring my children back.”

Exclusive by Rebecca Wright, David Culver and Ben Westcott, CNN



NIKE, H&M FACE CHINA FURY OVER XINJIANG COTTON 'CONCERNS'

Retail giants Nike and H&M are facing a backlash in China after they expressed concern about the alleged use of Uyghur forced labour in cotton production.

Many Chinese have called for boycotts, celebrities have cut ties and e-commerce platforms have dropped H&M.

Several Western countries imposed sanctions on China this week.

It is accused of committing serious human rights violations against the Uyghur Muslim minority in the Xinjiang autonomous region. China denies this.

The sanctions, including travel bans and asset freezes, target senior officials in the north-west region.

In December the BBC published in an investigation based on new research showing China was forcing hundreds of thousands of



minorities including Uyghurs into manual labour in Xinjiang's cotton fields.

How did Nike and H&M find themselves here?

The statements in question were made by the companies last year, but only resurfaced in recent days following the announcement of Western sanctions.

Both companies had said in separate statements that they were "concerned" about reports that Uyghurs were being forced to pick cotton in Xinjiang, and that they did not source products from the region.

But the latest furore appears to have been sparked by a recent social media post by the Communist Youth League, a Chinese Communist Party group.

"Spreading rumours to boycott Xinjiang cotton, while also wanting to make money in China? Wishful thinking!" it said on microblogging platform Weibo on Wednesday morning, as it shared screenshots of H&M's statement.

- Fashion brands face scrutiny over Xinjiang cotton

- UK tightens rules on using Uyghur-picked cotton

State media outlets have since launched campaigns defending Xinjiang cotton and criticising the brands.

Chinese state media CGTN shared a video on Weibo claiming to show the reality of cot-



ton-picking in Xinjiang, which involved automation and quotes from a Uyghur farmer saying that people "fought" to work there for high earnings.

State broadcaster CCTV said that H&M (Hennes & Mauritz) - a multinational firm with the headquarters in Sweden - had "miscalculated" in trying to be a "righteous hero", and that it "must pay a heavy price for its wrong actions".

H&M China has not yet responded to queries from the BBC, but the company posted a statement on Weibo on Wednesday saying that it "respects Chinese consumers as always" and that it "does not represent any political position".

By Wednesday night, at least three major Chinese e-commerce platforms - Pinduoduo, JD.com and Tmall - had withdrawn H&M products from sale, reports said.

Various celebrities such as Wang Yibo, Huang Xuan and Victoria Song released statements that they were severing ties with the brands, with one noting that "the country's interests are above all".

Social media has seen a huge wave of backlash against both companies, with numerous calls for people to boycott their products. The hashtag “I support Xinjiang cotton” is now the top trending topic on Weibo with more than 1.8bn views.

H&M has a long relationship with China, which is important to both sides. China is one of H&M’s main sources of supply and it is a big market too.

But calling out China on what it regards as a core domestic issue is something Beijing doesn’t like. Just ask South Korea or the Philippines, whose shop chains and fruit exports both suffered after diplomatic spats.

China likes to use its trading might and retail nationalism to pressure governments and multinationals - both at the same time preferably - to keep them quiet about its abuses.

The timing of this sudden “grassroots” reaction, led by celebrities who’ve been happy to take H&M money in exchange for endorsement, is down to a wave of co-ordinated sanctions imposed by the UK, US and EU in the last few days - endorsed by Sweden among others.

What is Xinjiang and who are the Uyghurs?

● Xinjiang, China’s biggest region, produces about a fifth of the world’s cotton. An autonomous region in theory, in reality it faces restrictions which have only increased in recent years.



● Millions of China’s Uyghurs, a Muslim minority that sees itself as culturally and ethnically close to Central Asian nations, live in Xinjiang.

● In recent decades, mass migration of Han Chinese (China’s ethnic majority) to Xinjiang has fuelled tensions with Uyghurs which has at points flared into deadly violence.



● This has resulted in a massive security crackdown and an extensive state surveillance programme, which critics say violate Uyghur human rights. China says such measures are necessary to combat separatism and terrorism.

● Uyghurs have been detained at camps where allegations of torture, forced labour and sexual abuse have emerged. China has denied these claims saying the camps are “re-education” facilities aimed at lifting Uyghurs out of poverty.

By Robin Brant



THE COST OF SPEAKING UP AGAINST CHINA

Women who made allegations last month of rape and sexual abuse in Chinese detention camps have been harassed and smeared in the weeks since. Rights groups say the attacks are typical of an aggressive campaign by China to silence those who speak up.

Qelbinur Sedik was making breakfast when the video call came, and the sight of her sister's name made her nervous. Many months had passed since the two had spoken. In fact, many months had passed since Sedik had spoken to any of her family in China.

Sedik was in the kitchen of her temporary home in the Netherlands, where she shared a room with several other refugees, mostly from Africa. Two weeks earlier, she and three other women had spoken to the BBC for a story about alleged rape and torture in China's secretive detention camps in the

Xinjiang region, where Sedik worked as a camp teacher.

Now her sister was calling.

She hit answer, but when the picture appeared it wasn't her sister on the screen, it was a policeman from her hometown in Xinjiang.

"What are you up to Qelbinur?" he said, smiling. "Who are you with?"

This was not the first time the officer had called from her sister's phone. This time, Sedik took a screenshot. When he heard the



sound it made, the officer removed his numbered police jacket, Sedik said. She took another screenshot.

‘You must think very carefully’

In conversations with the BBC over the past few weeks, 22 people who have left Xinjiang to live abroad described a pattern of threats, harassment, and public character attacks they said were designed to deter them from speaking out about alleged human rights abuses back home.

According to UN estimates, China has detained more than a million Uyghurs and other Muslims in camps in Xinjiang. The Chinese state has been accused of an array of abuses there including forced labour, sterilisation, torture, rape, and genocide. China denies those charges, saying its camps are “re-education” facilities for combatting terrorism.

Among the few who have fled Xinjiang and spoken publicly, many have received a call

like the one to Sedik that morning - from a police officer or government official at their family home, or from a relative summoned to a police station. Sometimes the calls contain vague advice to consider the welfare of their family in Xinjiang, sometimes direct threats to detain and punish relatives.

Others have been publicly smeared in press conferences or state media videos; or been subjected to barrages of messages or hacking attempts directed at their phones. (Last week, Facebook said that it had discovered “an extremely targeted operation” emanating from China to hack Uyghur activists abroad.)

Some of those who spoke to the BBC - from the US, UK, Australia, Norway, the Netherlands, Finland, Germany, and Turkey - provided screenshots of threatening WhatsApp, WeChat and Facebook messages; others described in detail what had been said in phone and video calls. Everyone described some form of detention or harassment of their fam-



ily members in Xinjiang by local police or state security officials.

When Qelbinur Sedik recounted the call from the policeman that morning, via her sister's phone, she buried her head in her hands and wept.

"He said, 'You must bear in mind that all your family and relatives are with us. You must think very carefully about that fact.'

"He stressed that several times, then he said, 'You have been living abroad for some time now, you must have a lot of friends. Can you give us their names?'

When she refused, the officer put Sedik's sister on the call, she said, and her sister shouted at her, 'Shut up! You should shut up from now on!', followed by a string of insults.

"At that point I couldn't control my emotions," Sedik said. "My tears flowed."

Before the officer hung up, Sedik said, he told her several times to go to the Chinese embassy so the staff there could arrange her safe passage back to China - a common instruction in these kinds of calls.

"This country opens its arms to you," he said.

'Misogyny as a communication style'

Reports of this type of intimidation are not new, but Uyghur activists say China has become more aggressive in response to growing outrage over alleged rights abuses in Xin-

jiang. The Chinese government has gone on the attack in public in recent weeks, directing a slew of misogynistic abuse specifically at women who have spoken up about alleged sexual assaults.

At recent press conferences, China's foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin and Xinjiang official Xu Guixiang held up pictures of women who gave first-hand accounts of sexual abuse in detention camps and called them "liars"; said one was "morally depraved" and of "inferior character"; and accused another of adultery. One woman was branded a "bitch of bad moral quality" by a former husband in what appeared to be a staged video put out by state media; another was called a "scumbag" and "child abuser" by a Chinese official.

Wang, the foreign ministry spokesman, revealed what he said were private medical records, claiming that they disproved one woman's account of having an IUD forcibly fitted. Officials have also claimed that sexually transmitted diseases were responsible for fertility problems suffered by former camp detainees, rather than violent physical abuse, and put out a range of propaganda material calling the women "actresses".



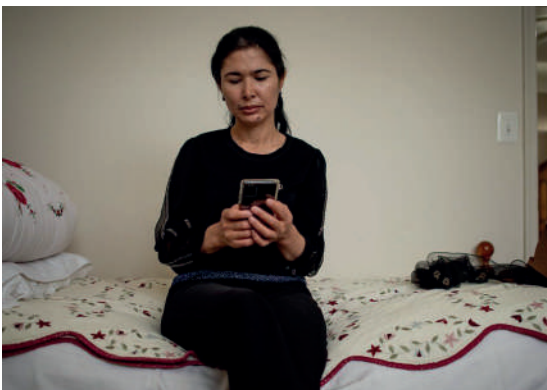
Tursunay Ziawudun, a former camp detainee who is now in the US, was one of the women attacked at a press conference. When she watched it, she was relieved Wang had not mentioned her family, she said, but “deeply sad” about the rest. Ziawudun has previously recounted being raped and tortured during her detention in Xinjiang in 2018.

“After all the horrors they inflicted on me, how can they be so cruel and shameless as to attack me publicly?” she said in a phone interview after the press conference.

The attacks on Ziawudun and others showed that China was “adopting misogyny as a style of public communication,” said James Millward, a professor of Chinese history at Georgetown University.

“We have these various women coming forward and telling very credible stories about how they’ve been abused,” he said. “And the response shows a complete tone deafness and misunderstanding of how sexual assault and sexual trauma is now being understood and treated now. Besides being horrifying, it’s also completely counterproductive for the Chinese state.”

The Chinese embassy in London told the BBC that China stood by its assertions that the women’s accounts of rape and sexual abuse were lies, and said it was reasonable to publicise private medical records as evidence.



Two other women who spoke to the BBC have been the targets of what appear to be highly staged videos, published by Chinese state media, in which their family and friends insult them and accuse them of stealing money and telling lies. According to a report published last month by the US-based Uyghur Human Rights Project, China has produced at least 22 videos in which individuals are allegedly forced to make scripted statements, often denouncing their family members as liars or thieves.

Aziz Isa Elkun, a Uyghur exile in the UK, had not been able to contact his elderly mother and sister for years when he saw them in a Chinese state media video calling him a liar and a shame on the family. Elkun’s crime had been to draw attention to the destruction of Uyghur cemeteries in Xinjiang, including his father’s tomb.

“You could tell what they were saying was scripted, but it was still extremely painful to see my elderly mother in a Chinese propaganda film,” Elkun said.

Qelbinur Sedik is worried a similar video of her husband could be released any day, she said. He told her on the phone late last year that Chinese officials had visited him at home in Xinjiang and forced him to recite lines calling her a liar. He said he struggled so much to say the lines correctly that it took four hours to film the short clip.

‘Maybe we can co-operate’

Another common form of harassment described by those who spoke to the BBC was pressure to spy on fellow Uyghurs and organisations that scrutinise China, often in return for contact with family, guarantees of relatives’ safety, or access to visas or passports.

A Uyghur British citizen who did not want to



be named said he was harassed repeatedly by intelligence officials during and after a visit to Xinjiang and told to spy on Uyghur groups and on Amnesty International, by joining the charity as a volunteer. When he refused, he received repeated calls from his brother pleading with him to do it, he said.

Jevlan Shirmemmet, who left Xinjiang to study in Turkey, gave the BBC a recording of a call he received a few weeks after posting on social media about his family's mass arrest in Xinjiang. The caller, who said he was from the Chinese embassy in Ankara, told Shirmemmet to "write down everyone you've been in contact with since you left Xinjiang," and send an email "describing your activities," so that "the mainland might reconsider your family's situation". Another Uyghur in exile in Turkey described a similar call from the same embassy.

Mustafa Aksu, a 34-year-old activist in the US who said his parents had been harassed in Xinjiang, showed the BBC text and voice messages from an old school friend - now a Chinese police officer - who Aksu said was pressuring him to provide information about Uyghur activists.

"He says, 'Maybe we can co-operate. I'm sure you must miss your parents.'"

Not everyone feels that they can refuse these requests. "When I say no, they get my younger brother and sister to call and tell me to do it," said a Uyghur student in Turkey, who

provided screenshots of the messages from police. "They could send my brother and sister to a concentration camp. What choice do I have?" she said.

Some have sought to protect themselves by gradually cutting off means of contact. "You can throw away the phone and cancel the number," said Abdulweli Ayup, a Uyghur linguist in Norway, "but you cancel your number and they contact you on Facebook; you delete Facebook and they contact you by email."

Others have tried beyond hope to stay in touch. A Uyghur exile in the Netherlands said she still sends pictures and emojis to her young son and parents, four years after her number was blocked. "Maybe one day they will see," she said.



The BBC was not able to independently verify the identities of the people behind the calls and messages provided by various interviewees, but Uyghur rights activists say efforts to coerce Uyghurs to spy for the Chinese government are common.

"It comes as an offer first - 'You won't have any more visa problems', or 'We can help your family' - that kind of thing," said Rahima Mahmut, a prominent UK-based Uyghur activist. "Later it comes as a threat," she said.

The UK Foreign Office told the BBC it was "closely monitoring reports that members of the Uyghur diaspora in the UK have been ha-



harassed by the Chinese authorities”, and that it had “raised our concerns directly with the Chinese embassy in London”.

The Chinese embassy in London told the BBC that the allegations in this story were “completely untrue” and it was “baffling that the BBC so readily believes whatever is said by a few ‘East Turkistan’ elements outside China” - using another term for the Xinjiang region.



Despite the growing public outrage over alleged abuses in Xinjiang, the number of people who have spoken publicly remains vanishingly small compared with the estimated number detained. China has been tremendously successful at silencing people through fear, said Nury Turkel, a commissioner on the US Commission on International Religious Freedom.

“Millions of people have disappeared into the camps, and yet we have only a handful of Uyghurs speaking out against the detention of their loved ones,” Turkel said. “Why? Because they are afraid.”

Some Uyghurs who have criticised China have managed to maintain limited contact with loved ones. Ferkat Jawdat, a prominent activist in the US, speaks to his mother regularly now, after campaigning publicly for her release from detention. She is under house arrest, and her calls are monitored, but she is there on the other end of the line.

It can be hard to make sense of why some Uyghurs are harassed and others are not; some allowed contact with loved ones and others not. Some have speculated that China is “A/B testing” - trying to work out whether fear or kindness is more efficient. For the thousands who are cut off, it can feel ruthless and arbitrary.

Jawdat knows that the likelihood of seeing his mother again before she dies is diminishing, so when they speak on the phone they speak carefully. He did tell her once that Chinese state media had put out a video of her saying she was ashamed of him. She said she knew, they had come to film it a few days earlier. “How did I look?” she joked. Then, taking a risk, she told him she was proud of him.

“It was the unscripted version,” he said.

By Joel Gunter



CHINA'S GENOCIDE AGAINST THE UYGHURS, IN 4 DISTURBING CHARTS



From internment camps to mass sterilization, here's why the ethnic minority's birthrate is plunging.

China is responsible for an "ongoing genocide" against its Uyghur ethnic minority, according to the first independent legal analysis of the situation undertaken by a nongovernmental organization. The report, published this week by the Newlines Institute for Strategy and Policy think tank in Washington, DC, brought together the findings of 50 experts in human rights and international law.



Governments around the world are also increasingly declaring that China's persecution of Uyghurs constitutes genocide. The United States applied that label in January, and the Canadian and Dutch parliaments followed suit in February.

It's taken three years to get to this point. In 2018, when journalists like myself started reporting that China was putting Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in internment camps, experts said we shouldn't call it genocide — yet.

Though they said the camp system's forced indoctrination and family separation may amount to cultural genocide, there wasn't enough evidence to show that China's actions met the United Nations' definition of demographic genocide. Besides, advocates were having a hard enough time convincing the world that China was detaining a million people in camps without trial.

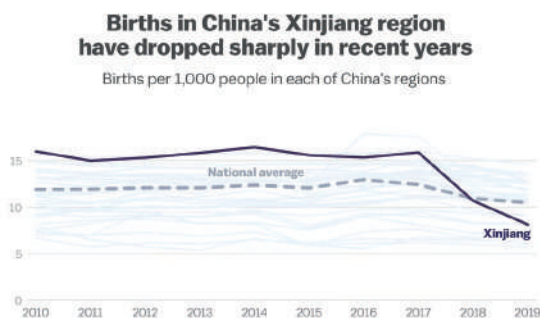
That's changed. China's persecution of the Uyghurs — a mostly Muslim ethnic minority that Beijing paints as a separatist and terror-

ist threat — is now well established. Several survivors have reported enduring torture in the camps. We've also learned that China transfers many of the detainees to factories across the country to perform forced labor. There's evidence that this forced labor has leached into the global supply chain for products we all use, from companies like Apple, Microsoft, and Amazon.

The new report says that the Chinese government's actions have violated "each and every act" prohibited by the UN Genocide Convention, namely: killing members of the group, causing serious bodily or mental harm, deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about the group's physical destruction, forcibly transferring children to another group, and imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group.

Evidence that China is breaching that last prohibition has come in recent months from Uyghur testimonies as well as the Chinese government's own statistics about Xinjiang, the northwestern region where Uyghurs are concentrated.

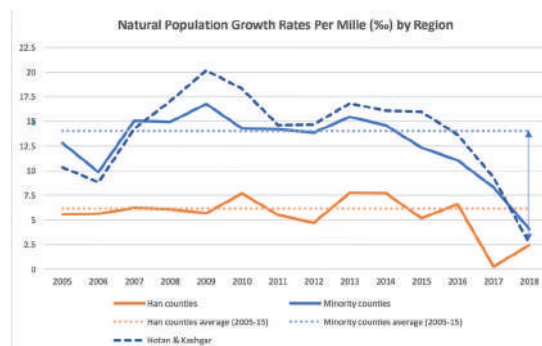
Take a look at this chart compiled using data from the China Statistical Yearbook (and



originally tweeted by an Australian data analyst in slightly different form). The x-axis shows the year and the y-axis shows the number of births per 1,000 people. We can see that in Xinjiang, the birthrate has halved in two years.

Adrian Zenz, a leading China scholar and senior fellow at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation in Washington, DC, added that the “natural population growth decline, which started in 2016/17, is even more shocking when you differentiate minority counties in Xinjiang from counties with a predominantly Han population.”

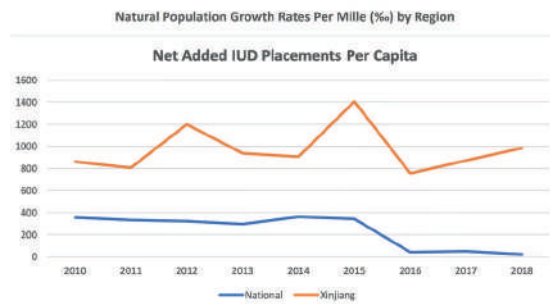
In a report released last summer, Zenz showed — using data from the Xinjiang Statistical Yearbooks — that between 2015 and 2018, population growth in the largely Uyghur areas of Kashgar and Hotan fell by a staggering 84 percent.



This wasn't only because China was splitting up Uyghur couples by sending some individuals to the camps. It was also slashing the Uyghur birthrate with the use of policies like mass sterilization and forced IUD implantation.

In 2014, a little over 200,000 IUDs were inserted in Xinjiang. That number rose to almost 330,000 IUDs by 2018 — a rise of more than 60 percent.

Meanwhile, the rates of IUD use elsewhere in China dropped, as you can see in this chart



compiled using data from China's official Annual Health and Hygiene Statistical Yearbooks. The y-axis shows the number of IUD placements per 100,000 people.

Zenz's report explained how the government arranged to subject women to this abusive treatment in their home communities: "Documents from 2019 reveal plans for a campaign of mass female sterilization ... Xinjiang planned to subject at least 80 percent of women of childbearing age in the rural southern four minority prefectures to intrusive birth prevention surgeries (IUDs or sterilizations), with actual shares likely being much higher."

He also pointed out that "budget figures indicate that this project had sufficient funding for performing hundreds of thousands of tubal ligation sterilization procedures in 2019 and 2020, with at least one region receiving additional central government funding."

After Zenz published the report, the Xinjiang government denied that forced sterilization or genocide was taking place. Instead, it told CNN that the plunging birthrate was due to "comprehensive implementation of the family planning policy." As CNN explained:

Up until 2015, the Chinese government enforced a "one-child" family planning policy countrywide, which allowed most urban couples no more than one baby. Ethnic minorities, such as the Uyghur people, were typically allowed to have up to three but Xinjiang expert Zenz said that families from

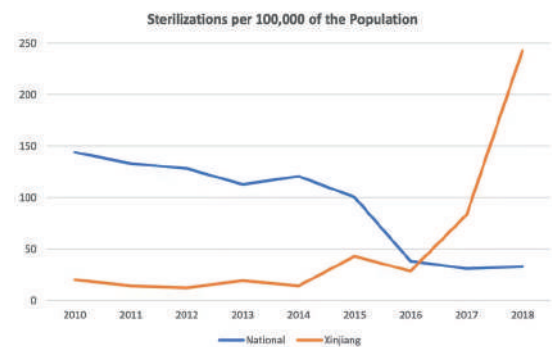
these groups often had many more children.

When China officially began the two-child policy in January 2016, Uyghur citizens living in cities were limited to two children for the first time as well — their rural counterparts could still have up to three.

The Xinjiang government attributed the sudden drop in population to Beijing's family planning policies finally being properly implemented in the region after 2017.

Although the government denied the role of forced sterilization and claimed that compliance with family planning policies is voluntary, Zenz responded that it was not very likely that "17 times more women spontaneously wanted to be sterilized."

Take a look at this chart, compiled using data from China's Health and Hygiene Statistical Yearbooks. The y-axis shows the number of sterilizations per 100,000 people.



China's own documents seem to rebut its official denials. They show that as the network of camps grew, women were threatened with internment if they violated the birth control policies for rural Uyghurs (maximum three kids per family). One government document from May 2018, cited in Zenz's report, said that women with too many kids must "both adopt birth control measures with long-term effectiveness and be subjected to vocational skills education and training."

In other words, they'd get sterilizations or IUDs, plus time in an internment camp.

And in fact, in Xinjiang's "Karakax List" — a leaked government document that details the reasons why hundreds of people were interned — childbearing violations were the most commonly cited reason for internment.

Uyghur survivors speak out on reproductive and sexual violence

In recent months, several Uyghur survivors have testified that the camps themselves have become sites of sterilization by injection, forced IUD implantation, and forced abortion.



Tursunay Ziyawudun, who spent nine months inside the camp system, told the Associated Press that she was given injections and kicked repeatedly in the stomach. Now, she no longer gets her period and can't have children. (The AP obtained Xinjiang hospital slides revealing that pregnancy prevention injections, including with Depo-Provera, are a commonly used measure for family planning.) Ziyawudun also said a "teacher" at the camp told the women that if they were found to be pregnant, they would have to get abortions.

Survivors are also coming forward with accounts of sexual abuse and torture in the camps. In new interviews obtained by the BBC, they talk about public gang rapes, about electrified sticks that are inserted into

women, about male officials picking the prettiest young women and taking them to a "black room" where there are no surveillance cameras.

Ziyawudun told the BBC that in May 2018, she and a cellmate in her 20s were taken at night to separate rooms. "The woman took me to the room next to where the other girl had been taken in. They had an electric stick, I didn't know what it was, and it was pushed inside my genital tract, torturing me with an electric shock."

She was brought back to her cell, and later, her cellmate returned too. "The girl became completely different after that, she wouldn't speak to anyone, she sat quietly staring as if in a trance," Ziyawudun said. "There were many people in those cells who lost their minds."

The interviews are hard to read. And the charts above — which show a people whose numbers are in stark decline — are hard to look at. But it's important to witness what China is doing to its Uyghur population. It has been largely neglected by the public, yet it looms as one of the most horrifying humanitarian crises in the world today.

Perhaps one of the reasons people have turned away from this crisis is because it's hard to know what to do about it, given China's economic might and political power. However, there are promising US bills to keep an eye on, including a new one seeking to expedite refugee applications from Uyghurs, as well as worthy advocacy groups and schools helping Uyghurs keep their culture alive.

By Sigal Samuel



CHINESE HACKERS USED FACEBOOK TO TARGET UYGHURS WITH POWERFUL IPHONE AND ANDROID SPYWARE

Facebook is trying to fight back against attacks on Uyghur activists, allegedly carried out by Chinese hackers who are wielding potent Android and iPhone malware, the social networking giant announced Wednesday.

Using Facebook, the group, previously dubbed “Evil Eye,” set up fake accounts posing as pro-Uyghur activists and journalists covering their cause. After creating a rapport with their targets, they then sent users links to either malicious websites that were hacked and laced with iOS malware, or to websites they’d created with domains that looked like those of popular Uyghur and Turkish news sites. But the majority of the malicious activity took place outside of Facebook, explained Nathaniel Gleicher, head of security policy at Facebook.

The attacks took place across 2019 and 2020. Targets included activists, journalists and dissidents predominantly among Uyghurs living abroad in the United States, Australia,

Canada and Middle Eastern and Central Asian countries. Gleicher said the company is informing those affected. He added that this was “supertargeted” espionage, with targets numbering below 500 on Facebook, and was the inverse of what the social network has seen in broad disinformation campaigns on Facebook. As an indicator of just how



targeted the attacks were, the hackers' code would only install the iPhone malware on a device when they met certain criteria, such as geolocation and language.

Some of the tainted websites contained JavaScript code that resembled previously reported exploits that had installed iOS malware known as INSOMNIA on victims' devices. On the Android side, the hackers created rogue Android app stores where they published Uyghur-themed applications, including a prayer app. Facebook also said that it found two Chinese companies were the developers behind some of the Android malware.

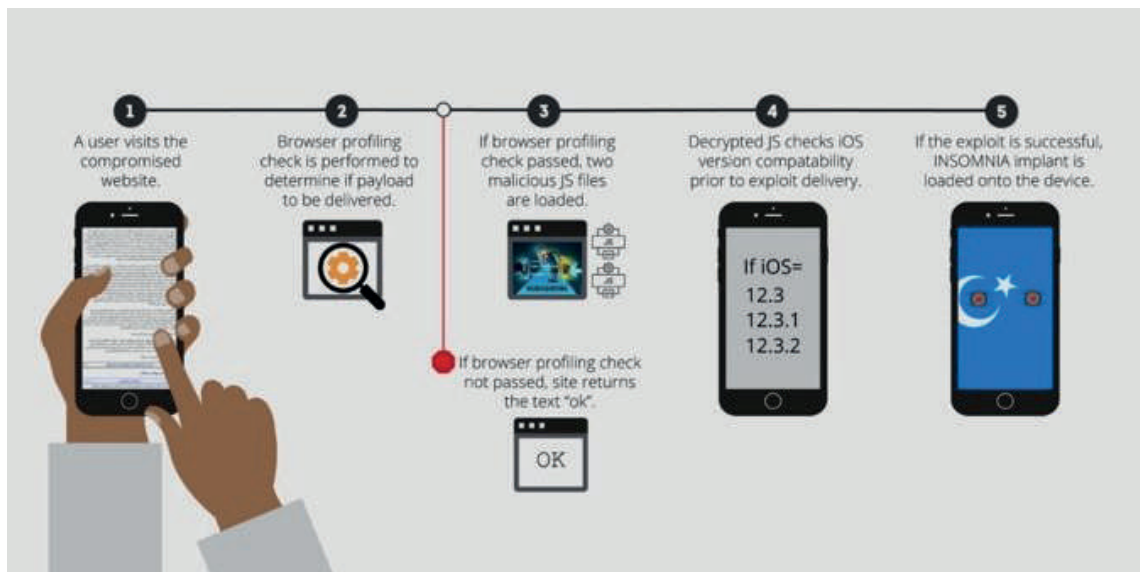
Facebook hoping for deterrent

Mike Dvilyanski, Facebook's head of cyberespionage investigations, told Forbes the malware was "fairly sophisticated," though there was no evidence they'd used zero-days (unpatched software flaws) in recent attacks, even if they had in past attacks on iOS and Android users. The spyware was able to snoop on almost all data on a device including calls, messages, locations, photos and contacts, and it could listen through the phone by turning the microphone on.

Facebook is hopeful that in calling the hacks out, it will have an effect in deterring the hacker crew. "We did see this group react and change their intensity [when past research on their activities were released] and know they're sensitive to these disclosures," said Dvilyanski.

The same hackers were spotted by Google researchers in 2019, also targeting iPhone and Android users from the ethnic Muslim population of China's far-western province Xinjiang. Western governments, including the United States, have leveled sanctions against Chinese officials and companies involved in the alleged detention of up to a million Uyghurs, and other Muslim minorities, in a vast network of forced labor and "re-education" camps. DJI, the Chinese drone giant, was the latest to have been caught up in the sanctions, as the Commerce Department banned American companies exporting any tech to the company.

By Thomas Brewster





BBC JOURNALIST LEAVES CHINA AFTER BEIJING CRITICISES UYGHURS COVERAGE

John Sudworth's relocation to Taiwan comes after 'months of personal attacks' over reporting of alleged abuses of minorities.

A senior BBC journalist has left Beijing for Taiwan at short notice after nine years reporting from China, amid concerns for his safety and that of his family.

It is the latest loss to Beijing's fast-shrinking foreign press corps, after last year saw at least 18 journalists expelled, one detained and two others flee home to Australia after an intense diplomatic standoff.

John Sudworth and his wife, Yvonne Murray, a journalist who covers China for Ireland's RTÉ news, left the country on 23 March, according to the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China (FCCC), an association of Beijing-based journalists.

He faced months of personal attacks and disinformation from Chinese authorities and state media before his departure, including videos posted online that used footage taken from police cameras, the FCCC said in a statement.

"The departure of Sudworth and Murray – on top of the expulsions of at least 18 correspondents last year – is a loss for the journalism community in China and more broadly, for anyone committed to understanding the country," the FCCC said.

"He forms one of an ever-larger number of journalists driven out of China by unacceptable harassment."

The BBC released a short statement saying that the move came after Sudworth's award-winning work "exposed truths the Chinese authorities did not want the world to know".

A BBC report released in February detailed

allegations of systemic rape in internment camps in Xinjiang region that prompted a fierce backlash from China.

Sudworth was not credited on that report, but the Chinese foreign ministry accused him of crossing “red lines” in other coverage of the crackdown on Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang, and in his coverage of the Covid-19 pandemic, the FCCC said.

China denied the BBC report on sexual exploitation, and other allegations of human rights abuses in Xinjiang, saying the government crackdown in the region targets terrorism and extremism.

State-run tabloid Global Times, quoted a Xinjiang party official on Wednesday as saying that a number of people in the region planned to sue the BBC for “producing fake news, spreading rumours about Xinjiang and slandering China’s policy in the region”.

The FCCC statement on Sudworth’s abrupt departure also highlighted a growing legal threat to foreign journalists working in China.

In 2020 China was the leading jailer of journalists for the second year in a row, according to an annual survey by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ).

The vast majority of them are Chinese citi-

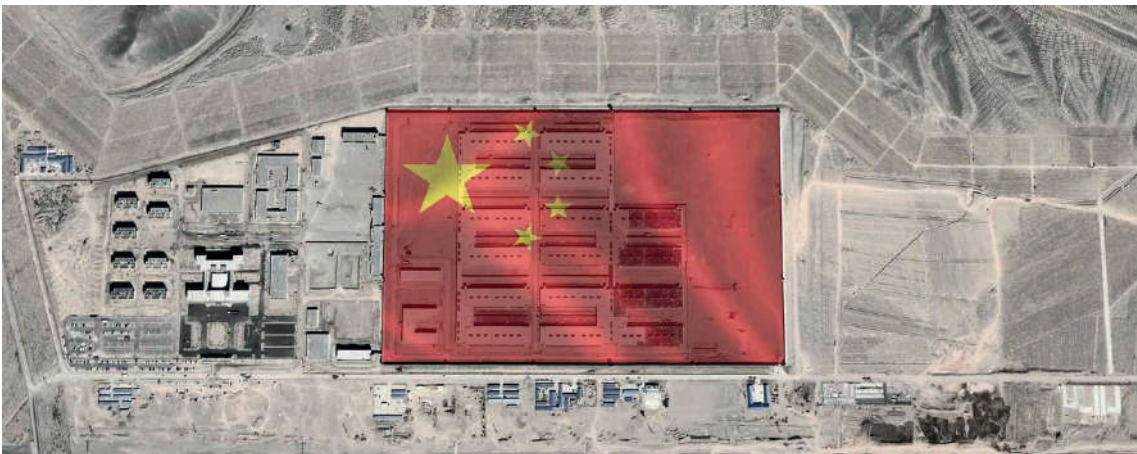
zens, but an Australian, Cheng Lei, was arrested on national security charges last year and there are concerns about other measures Beijing could deploy, including barring reporters from leaving the country.

“Alarmingly, Chinese authorities have also shown a greater willingness to threaten journalists with legal measures, proceedings that could subject them to exit bans, barring them from leaving China,” it said in the statement, which called on Beijing to live up to promises on press freedom.

“We urge China to live up to its stated commitment to facilitate unhindered reporting in China. In particular the FCCC calls for an end to dangerous, personal attacks on individual reporters and foreign media outlets.”

A spokeswoman for Taiwan’s foreign ministry, Joanne Ou, said it could not comment on individual cases, Reuters reported, but added: “We welcome all reporters from media outlets to come to Taiwan and enjoy freedom of the press and speech.”

By Emma Graham-Harrison





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What is happening in East Turkistan?

What is true and what is false?

The “İSTİQLAL” journal uses reliable sources, evidence and witnesses to reveal China’s crimes against humanity and shine a light on the oppression in East Turkistan as well as exposing China’s fake news propaganda.

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