



**Forum:** The International Court of Justice

**Issue:** Application of the Convention on the Prevention of Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in China Against the Uyghur Population (Canada v. People's Republic of China)

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## Introduction:

The Uyghur population is an ethnically, culturally, and linguistically distinct Turkic group indigenous to East Turkistan, a region encompassing 642,000 square miles in the present-day Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, People's Republic of China. The Manchu Qing Dynasty, the last imperial dynasty of China, formally annexed East Turkistan in 1884 after prolonged, popular resistance against occupation. The colonizing power renamed the region Xinjiang, which means new dominion or territory in Chinese. After the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1911, East Turkistan was occupied by Chinese warlords. Uyghurs and others fought for their freedom from Chinese rule, which they achieved in 1933 and 1944. The two independent East Turkistan Republics of 1933 and 1944 were short-lived, and the People's Republic of China ultimately succeeded in forcibly taking over East Turkistan into their national territory in 1949. Since the annexation of their native lands, the Uyghur people, and their homeland of East Turkistan, have been under assault. For decades, the Uyghur people, their language, culture, tradition, and faith, have been in constant danger of oppression and diminishment. Today, the Chinese Communist Party is committing genocide against the Uyghur people.

The ICJ must determine whether the violent allegations against the Chinese government correspond with the definition of genocide in international law and whether measures should be applied to protect the Uyghur population residing in Xinjiang.

***The principal legal issues which will be considered by the Court partially include:***

- Were acts committed that fall under Article II of the Genocide Convention?
- Was there an intent to eliminate, in part or as a whole, the Uyghur population?
- Has China neglected its obligation to prevent genocide?
- Are any measures to be continued or expanded to safeguard the Uyghur population?



The case will involve the ICJ in considering the evidence of the cruelties committed and China's obligation to prevent and punish genocide.

### Definition of key terms:

**Annexation:** The act of adding to something larger, especially the incorporation of new territory into the domain of a city, country, or state.

**Genocide:** The deliberate and systematic extermination of a national, racial, political, or cultural group.

**IUD's:** A method of contraception.

**Indoctrination:** The act of heavily influencing one's line of thought in order to make them believe something from a specific point of view.

**De-extremification:** Initiatives, policies, or programs with the intention of reducing/eliminating ideologies and behavior of a certain religious, social, or cultural group.

**Persecution:** Systematic (and severe) mistreatment or oppression of an individual or a group, often targeting a certain religion, ethnicity, nationality, or gender

### Background:

#### Origin

The earliest use of the term "Uyghur" (Wei-hu), during the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534 C.E.), in China, refers to the people as part of the Gaoche, a group of Turkic tribes, which were later called the Tiele people (or possibly Turan). The Uyghur people have historically always been a nomadic people, moving from place to place over time. Between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries, they lived in what is now Mongolia, the Uyghur Khaganate. In this period, the Uyghurs were a very sophisticated people, and the main religion was Manichaeism (and not Islam). After the collapse of the Uyghur Empire in 840 C.E., Uyghur people/refugees resettled to the Tarim Basin, a massive, enclosed



valley located in Northern China, living together with the local people and becoming the ethnic group designated as "Uyghur" today. The people is still the same today, but there has been a notable shift in their religion, going from a mixed society of Buddhism and Christianity to Islam due to their leader around the 10<sup>th</sup> century, Satuq Bughra Khan.

### **Rising Tensions**

In 2014, the Chinese government launched a "Strike Hard Campaign Against Violent Terrorism" campaign. This followed several violent incidents and riots, which the Chinese government connected with the Uyghur people. Since then, Uyghurs in Xinjiang were slowly being affected by extensive controls and restrictions which the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Chinese government were imposing upon their religious, cultural, economic, and social lives.

This control and restriction reached its peak in 2017. Under regional party leader Chen Quanguo, these security measures escalated entirely and transformed into a state of mass detention. The Chinese government started building hundreds of "de-extrimification" camps, meant/masked with the purpose of preventing terrorism and violence, and training the Uyghur people to become more Chinese and civil. However, it is strongly believed that the Chinese government has gone too far with these camps. Firstly, Uyghur people are being brought in for actions as innocent as wearing a veil, traveling abroad, or having WhatsApp on their phone. Secondly, it is strongly believed (with much evidence) that the behavior and control in the camps is violating many human rights.

Firstly, evidence points to state programs transferring Uyghur workers to the camps, where they are under constant surveillance (even in extremely private environments), restricted movement, and mandatory classes in Mandarin and Chinese ideology, which are argued to be a form of forced labor. Secondly, there are reports of mandatory pregnancy checks, forced sterilizations, and the application (without mutual agreement) of IUDs. This can also be seen in the decrease in the birth rate of Uyghur children.



Thirdly, satellites have picked up video and thus confirmed the destruction of various Uyghur cultural, religious, and social landmarks/sites, such as mosques, shrines, and cemeteries. The practice of their religion, Islam, has also been severely penalized. However, the biggest and most prominent allegation towards the Chinese government regarding the Uyghur people is the mass, dictatorial detention of over a million Uyghur people, without any form of trial or judicial process. Being forcibly held, they live in an environment where they are exposed to political indoctrination, sleep deprivation, overcrowding, and psychological torture. Together, these actions have been noted by the UN and have led many countries to invest in investigation and knowledge on the matter. Following the evidence and reports gathered, and the information that has now been revealed on the matter, many (mainly Western) countries have begun imposing sanctions and countering measures on China, including a legal ban on products from the Xinjiang region, and several nations have declared the Xinjiang-Uyghur situation as a form of genocide.

Currently, as of 2026, Xinjiang now claims that its newly defined “vocational education and training centers” are officially closed. However, many researchers and human rights groups note that this hasn’t been closed, but that the system has simply been institutionalized. Many former detainees have been shifted into the formal prison system with lengthy sentences or have been integrated into forced labor programs. The focus of the conflict today largely revolves around global trade, China tracking and pressuring Uyghurs who live abroad (transnational repression), and enforcing import bans on goods connected to the region.

### **Evidence of abuse**

Leaked Chinese government operating procedures state that the main feature of the camps is to ensure adherence to CCP ideology, with the inmates being continuously held captive in the camps for a minimum of 12 months, depending on their performance on Chinese ideology tests. The New York Times has reported that inmates are required



to "sing hymns praising the Chinese Communist Party and write 'self-criticism' essays," and that prisoners are also subjected to physical and verbal abuse by prison guards. Other policies have included forced labor, suppression of Uyghur religious practices, forced sterilization, forced contraception, and forced abortion.

### **China's perspective**

So far, the situation at hand seems clear and straightforward, with the shocking narrative and view of the Uyghur people. To truly understand the situation, however, it is crucial to understand China's perspective and its argument that its behavior is justified and legal, while being beneficial for the nation. Here is a clear, summarized overview of China's stance towards the allegations of genocide, forced labor, detention, and other human rights abuses.

Firstly, China argues that the measures and policies are needed to improve national security, with a stress on the "Three Evils": terrorism, separatism and religious extremism. Especially after the violence in 2014, the state strongly affirms that heavy security measures are necessary in order to protect civilians, also pointing out that there have not been any major terrorist attacks since the implementation of the regulations and restrictions. Secondly, the government claims that the function of the camps is not to subdue and oppress the Uyghur people, but to teach them the national language, provide legal knowledge, and offer skills to uneducated/poor individuals that improve their abilities to seek jobs and help the country on a local scale. Connected to this argument is their claim that the program, instead of being a form of forced labor, is an attempt to give the poor a working environment where they have shelter and nutrition, and where they can improve the nation's economy. Furthermore, the nation strongly argues that the criticism and resistance internationally are a violation of the nation's sovereignty and privacy, concluding that the opposition is an attempt by Western countries to halt China's economic rise. Further arguments for China's view and perspective must be produced by the defense.



## Canada's part

Although there is much evidence that proves these allegations, Canada's vote was to abstain in the matter of labeling the Chinese persecution a genocide. The motion was also calling on the government to lobby the International Olympic Committee to move the 2022 Winter Olympic Games out of Beijing. It was passed over the strenuous objections of Chinese Ambassador to Canada Cong Peiwu, who denounced the vote as meddling in China's internal affairs. MPs on the House of Commons subcommittee on international human rights agreed in a report with the experts who say China's campaign against the Uyghurs meets the definition of genocide set out by the UN. The committee heard testimony from several Uyghur witnesses who gave first-hand accounts of atrocities. Bob Rae, Canada's ambassador to the United Nations, called on the United Nations to investigate whether China's persecution of ethnic Muslim Uyghurs in Xinjiang constitutes genocide. Despite these calls, Prime Minister Trudeau and his cabinet ministers have been reluctant to use the word "genocide" to describe China's actions against the Uyghurs. During these calls, Trudeau said the word is an "extremely loaded" one, and he is not prepared to use it at this point.

Lastly, Canada has initiated an independent investigation to seek new evidence in addition to the already proven materials. Further information must and is expected to be sought out by the applicants and defendants of this court of law.

## Timeline of Key Events

<b>May 2014</b>	The establishment of the 'Strike hard against violent terrorism' to increase security in Xinjiang.
<b>March 2017</b>	The "Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Regulation on De-extremification" is passed, listing 15 instances of "extremism", and clearly expressing their opposition towards them.
<b>April 2017</b>	Reports surface further elaborating on the camps being built by China named 'Reeducation camps'.



<b>August 2018</b>	A credible report is released by the Human Rights Council that provides evidence of over one million Uyghur people being held in detention.
<b>October 2018</b>	China officially changes the legal name of their camps from “De-extremification” to “vocational education and training centers”.
<b>November 2019</b>	Proof of the detentions, the “Xinjiang Papers” is released/leaked via the New York Times.
<b>June 2020</b>	Dr. Adrian Zenz publishes a report documenting forced sterilization applied to the Uyghur people, meaning that one of the genocide criteria is met.
<b>January 2021</b>	Several Western countries, including Canada, USA, France and the Netherlands, officially class the Uyghur situation as genocide.
<b>May 2025</b>	EU Forced Labor Regulation enters full effect, creating a legal ban on many products from the Xinjiang region.
<b>March 2026</b>	Several human rights organizations submit a plea to the International Criminal Court (ICC), arguing for justice to be served on the base of forced deportation and labor, and violations of human rights of the Uyghur people.

## Major parties involved:

### China:

China is the defendant in the discussed case.

China is, of course, the main protagonist in the problem. Through various pieces of evidence, partial criminal activities have been revealed in the Xinjiang region, and there has been a lot of research into this, which is also made difficult by the Chinese government withholding information about exactly what is happening at the so-called 're-education camps'. However, there was already suspicion about the situation at the beginning of the story when a report was released in August 2014 connecting 'closed-



style training' with the re-education of 259 'untrustworthy people'. All the evidence found to prove the defendant's innocence should be presented in court.

### **Canada:**

Canada is the applicant in the discussed case.

Canada is one of the biggest critics of the situation, given the research they have conducted into the problem. As stated earlier in this report, Canada has launched its own independent investigation, and together with survivors and people who escaped from the camps, the evidence against China is accumulating at an increasingly rapid pace. The rest of the evidence should be presented in court, in order to prove the applicants' complaints.

### **Russia:**

Like Belarus, Russia is one of China's greatest allies, and they adopt China's theories and agree with the opinion regarding the ethnic groups living in Xinjiang. Moreover, an opposing attitude would create undesirable tensions that could escalate further. So, it is much easier to agree and say that China is merely preventing terrorist extremist attacks and dealing with these terrorists in an 'appropriate' manner.

### **Egypt:**

Not only Egypt, but a variety of other nations agree with the Chinese government as they profit from Chinese investments from the 'Belt and Road Initiative'. That includes building infrastructure on their grounds, in return for funds. Opposing your country's biggest investor isn't the brightest choice; thus, being supportive of China's actions is the best option.

### **Human Rights Watch (HRW):**

Alongside Amnesty International, the Human Rights Watch (HRW) has conducted lots of interviews with survivors for their research and continues to find boatloads of evidence



against the Chinese government. One of their outrageous findings: One Uyghur whose relative in China was denied a passport said that “The police showed them my photo and asked, ‘Do you know this person?’ [The relative] said yes. The police then told them to forget about passports.”

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