

# URGENT ACTION

## MISSING AND ARBITRARILY DETAINED IN XINJIANG

More than 60 people from predominantly Muslim ethnic groups have been allegedly interned in camps or sentenced without a fair trial and sent to prison in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Xinjiang). These cases are representative of the perhaps 1 million or more men and women estimated to have been detained in the region since 2017. Based on evidence collected by Amnesty International in the recent report "*Like We Were Enemies in a War*", the Chinese government has knowingly and purposefully targeted ethnic minorities in Xinjiang, including by unlawful restriction of their basic human rights, as well as by conducting an ethnically targeted campaign of mass detention and torture and other ill treatment.

**TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER**

*President of the People's Republic of China*

*Xi Jinping  
Zhongnanhai  
Xichangan'jie Xichengqu, Beijing Shi 100017  
People's Republic of China  
Fax: +86 10 6238 1025  
Email: english@mail.gov.cn*

*Dear President Xi Jinping,*

*I am distressed to learn about the cases of more than 60 people from predominantly Muslim ethnic groups who have been allegedly interned in camps or sentenced without a fair trial and sent to prison in Xinjiang. These cases are representative of the perhaps 1 million or more men and women estimated to have been detained by the Chinese government in Xinjiang since 2017.*

*Based on the evidence collected by Amnesty International in the report "[Like We Were Enemies in a War](#)", the Chinese government has committed at least the crimes against humanity of imprisonment, torture and persecution in Xinjiang. Lawful activities many of us take for granted such as living, travelling, studying abroad; communicating with people abroad; reciting the Qur'an or wearing religious clothing can be considered a reason to be sent to an internment camp or a prison, where detainees are subjected to a relentless forced indoctrination campaign, physical and psychological torture and other forms of ill-treatment.*

*Family members living overseas are desperate to get in touch with their loved ones, many of whom they have not heard from in years. Further to their desperation is the fact that, without any access to a lawyer of their choice, the detained individuals (mostly Uyghurs, Kazakhs and those from other predominantly Muslim ethnic minority groups) are at even further heightened risk of torture or ill-treatment.*

***I therefore urge you to:***

- ***Immediately release all people detained in internment camps and in prisons in Xinjiang, unless there is sufficient, credible and admissible evidence that they have committed an internationally recognized offence.***
- ***Pending their release, disclose their whereabouts, allow them access to their family and a lawyer of their choice, and ensure they are not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.***

*Yours sincerely,*

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Xinjiang is one of the most ethnically diverse regions in China. More than half of the region's population of 22 million people belong to mostly Turkic and predominantly Muslim ethnic groups, including Uyghurs (around 11.3 million), Kazakhs (around 1.6 million) and other populations whose languages, cultures and ways of life vary distinctly from those of the Han who are the majority in "interior" China.

Since 2017, under the guise of a campaign against "terrorism" and "religious extremism", the government of China has carried out massive and systematic abuses against Muslims living in Xinjiang. It is estimated that over a million people have been arbitrarily detained in internment camps throughout Xinjiang since 2017.

The report [\*"Like We Were Enemies in a War": China's Mass Internment, Torture, and Persecution of Muslims in Xinjiang\*](#) is the most comprehensive account to date of the crushing repression faced by Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities in Xinjiang. Amnesty's new investigation details human rights violations committed by the Chinese government in Xinjiang between 2017 and 2021, including those occurring outside the internment camps. Based primarily on first-hand testimonial evidence from more than 50 former internment camp detainees and witnesses interviewed by Amnesty International, most of whom had never shared their stories publicly before, the report draws upon former detainees' accounts of their experiences during their initial detention, inside the internment camps and after release from the camps.

The evidence Amnesty International has gathered provides a factual basis for the conclusion that the Chinese government has committed at least the following crimes against humanity: imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law; torture; and persecution.

The Chinese authorities had denied the existence of internment camps until October 2018, when they began describing them as voluntary, free "vocational training" centres. They claim that the objective of this vocational training is to provide people with technical and vocational education to enable them to find jobs and become "useful" citizens. China's explanation, however, contradicts reports of beatings, food deprivation and solitary confinement that have been collected from former detainees.

China has rejected calls from the international community, including Amnesty, to allow independent experts unrestricted access to Xinjiang. Instead, China has made efforts to silence criticism by inviting delegations from different countries to visit Xinjiang for carefully orchestrated and closely monitored tours.

The government of China must immediately close all the remaining internment camps and release all persons held in internment camps or other detention facilities – including prisons – in Xinjiang, unless there is sufficient credible and admissible evidence that they have committed an internationally recognized offence. An independent and effective investigation into the alleged crimes against humanity and other serious violations of human rights documented in the report *"Like We Were Enemies in a War"* is required. All those reasonably suspected of criminal responsibility should be brought to justice in fair trials.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** Chinese, English

You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** 10 September 2021

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

**NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN:** [Group] (they/them)