



## Introduction

This timeline documents the changing Communist Party of China response to accusations of human rights violations in Xinjiang. As human rights groups have identified internment camps and forced labour in the region, China has denied these accusations, giving changing explanations since 2018.

### 2017 – August 2018

Chinese news begins to report “anti-extremist” boarding education centers (<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/201711/1076203.shtml>) opening up in Xinjiang. There is no governmental response to accusations of human rights violations. China intensifies anti-terrorism policy and policing in the region. (<https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1036950.shtml>)

### August – October 2018

Following UN statement that 1 million Uyghurs were being detained in Xinjiang, the Chinese delegation (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/13/china-state-media-defend-intense-controls-xinjiang-uyghurs>) fully denies the existence of camps or detainment. The foreign minister (<https://web.archive.org/web/20210614204608/https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1117832.shtml>) further denies any “re-education camps” The delegation and foreign minister also state that anti-terrorism policy does not target any specific religious or ethnic groups.

16 October 2018

CCTV

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20210612004742/https://s.googlempulse.net/boomerang/7XL4G-6N3JX-QZ6JL-GESDR-2KLZL>) releases a segment showing a 'vocational education center'

([https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/22/from-denial-to-pride-how-china-changed-its-language-on-xinjiangs-camps?](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/22/from-denial-to-pride-how-china-changed-its-language-on-xinjiangs-camps?CMP=share_btn_tw&fbclid=IwAR0kekPU3hjMQ6KXHDQmd96JrCyYI)

[CMP=share\\_btn\\_tw&fbclid=IwAR0kekPU3hjMQ6KXHDQmd96JrCyYI](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/22/from-denial-to-pride-how-china-changed-its-language-on-xinjiangs-camps?CMP=share_btn_tw&fbclid=IwAR0kekPU3hjMQ6KXHDQmd96JrCyYI)

asserting these centers are aimed at de-radicalization and job training. This follows regulation

([https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/22/from-denial-to-pride-how-china-changed-its-language-on-xinjiangs-camps?](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/22/from-denial-to-pride-how-china-changed-its-language-on-xinjiangs-camps?CMP=share_btn_tw&fbclid=IwAR0kekPU3hjMQ6KXHDQmd96JrCyYI)

[CMP=share\\_btn\\_tw&fbclid=IwAR0kekPU3hjMQ6KXHDQmd96JrCyYI](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/22/from-denial-to-pride-how-china-changed-its-language-on-xinjiangs-camps?CMP=share_btn_tw&fbclid=IwAR0kekPU3hjMQ6KXHDQmd96JrCyYI)

allowing the local government to set up "education centers"

with boarding aimed towards those suspected of terrorism.

12 March 2019

Governor of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region,

Shohrat Zakir,

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20210614203834/http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201903/12/WS5c8775e8a3106c65c34ee376.html>)

denies accusations of concentration camps in the region.

Instead he affirms that there is "vocational training" similar to boarding schools in which students are guaranteed freedom.

28 March 2019

China releases a white paper entitled 'The Fight Against Terrorism and Extremism and Human Rights Protections in Xinjiang'

(<https://xinjiang.sppga.ubc.ca/fight-against-terrorism/>).

The white paper cites "education and training centers" being established for de-radicalization and rehabilitation, stating

the centers are in accordance with the law.

30 July 2019

In a press conference,

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20210614203614/https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1159769.shtml>)

Governor Shohrat Zakir declares that most "students" have left what he refers to as "vocational training centers" for deradicalization and education. He states that the centers have been essential for Uyghurs to enter the job market, eliminating poverty.

16 August 2019

Beijing releases a white paper entitled "Vocational

### **Education and Training in Xinjiang**

**(<https://xinjiang.sppga.ubc.ca/vocational-ed-aug-19/>)**”.

The paper states that “vocational education and training centers” have been established to end extremism and terrorism in Xinjiang. The paper notes that the centers focus on job skills, law education, and deradicalization. China also asserts commitment to ensuring “trainees” basic rights.

### **16 October 2019**

The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region’s government commits to having **at least half a million “training and education sessions” between 2019 and 2021**

**(<https://web.archive.org/web/20210614183738/https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/201910/1167074.shtml>)**

. The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region government states that this training will be vocational and focussed on unemployed workers, high school graduates, and those living in poverty.

### **3 December 2019**

#### **In a statement**

**(<https://web.archive.org/web/20210614201301/http://www.china-un.ch/eng/dbdt/t1721537.htm>)** after the publication of

leaked documents by the New York Times, a spokesperson for Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region denies all accusations of detainment and internment camps. The spokesperson points to “education and training centers” for those suspected or found guilty of extremist activity only.

### **10 December 2019**

#### **In a press release**

**([https://web.archive.org/web/20210103082702/http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-](https://web.archive.org/web/20210103082702/http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-12/10/c_138618363.htm)**

**12/10/c\_138618363.htm**), Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Regions Governor Shohrat Zakir asserts that all “trainees” have graduated and left the various “education and training centers” in Xinjiang.

### **9 January 2020**

#### **The Chinese foreign minister**

**(<https://web.archive.org/web/20200306181348/http://www.globaltimes.cn/c>**

states that China has contributed to the global fight against terrorism, citing “education and training centers” as key in deradicalization and the eradication of poverty. He states that due to these centres, Xinjiang has not had a terrorist attack in three years.

### **12 March 2020**

**A Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region government spokesperson**

**(<https://web.archive.org/web/20200330102139/https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1182377.shtml>)**

denies the spreading of COVID-19 in “education and training centers” stating all trainees have graduated. The spokesperson reconfirms that there were no “camps” in Xinjiang but “school-like institutions” to prevent terrorism. ▶

## 17 September 2020

China releases a white paper entitled **“Employment and Labour Rights in Xinjiang”** (<https://xinjiang.sppga.ubc.ca/employment-sept-2020/>), which re-states China's commitment to development and security in Xinjiang. The paper mentions “vocational training” as essential to job creation and to ending poverty in the region. ◀

## 18 February 2021

**During a press conference pertaining to Xinjiang** ([https://web.archive.org/web/20210614181951/https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjbxw/t1854674.shtml](https://web.archive.org/web/20210614181951/https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/t1854674.shtml)), representatives re-state that there are no longer “vocational education and training centers” in Xinjiang. Government representatives deny any human rights abuses are occurring in Xinjiang, focussing on dispelling forced labour accusations. ▶

## January – May 2021

Xinjiang officials hold various press conferences in Beijing focused on dispelling international concerns regarding ongoing human rights violations. Largely focusing on accusations of **forced labour, officials state that all work and training in Xinjiang is voluntary**. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20210526163304/http://english.ts.cn/system/>). **They also denied accusations of forced marriage and sterilization**. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20210602112250/https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/n>) ◀

## 7 May 2021

**Ambassador Cui Tiankai** (<https://web.archive.org/web/20210614201301/http://www.china-un.ch/eng/dbdt/t1721537.htm>) rejects concerns of human rights abuses by Western countries. The ambassador also reconfirms China's fight against terrorism and the promotion of stability in Xinjiang. ▶

## 18 October 2021

Xinjiang officials continue holding press conferences in Beijing. At the 56th press conference, held on October 18th, spokesperson Xu Guixiang condemns **“anti-China forces” for spreading misinformation**. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20220805203646/http://be.china->

[embassy.gov.cn/zt/xinjiang2/202111/t20211105\\_10444836.htm](http://embassy.gov.cn/zt/xinjiang2/202111/t20211105_10444836.htm))

before citing various publications claiming that charges of genocide are premature, articles of support from U.S.-based organizations such as The Grayzone and the World Workers Party, as well as the United States' own history of colonial violence.

## 18 November 2021

At the 60th press conference held by Xinjiang officials in Beijing on November 18th, spokesperson Xu Guixiang reaffirms the threat of the "three evil forces" (**terrorism, separatism, and extremism** (<https://xinjiang.sppga.ubc.ca/glossary/>)) while sharing some **experiences from the region's fight against terrorism**

([https://web.archive.org/web/20211118090940/http://news.jschina.com.cn/scroll/szyw/202111/t20211118\\_2895195.shtml](https://web.archive.org/web/20211118090940/http://news.jschina.com.cn/scroll/szyw/202111/t20211118_2895195.shtml))

. He argues that authorities have worked to protect human rights, have never singled out a religion or ethnicity as a target, and have relied on education and vocational training to eradicate extreme thinking.

## 19 July 2022

In anticipation of a report produced under United Nations High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet that details human rights violations in Xinjiang, Chinese authorities **oppose its publication and circulate a letter among diplomats** (<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/exclusive-china-seeks-stop-un-rights-chief-releasing-xinjiang-report-document-2022-07-19/>) in a search for signatures of support.

## 11 September 2022

*China Daily*, a state-owned English-language newspaper, **accuses**

(<https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202209/11/WS631dcc50a310fd2b29e77154.html>)

the U.S. government of carrying out an orchestrated disinformation campaign against China by funding journalists, think tanks, and databases such as the Xinjiang Victims Database. This follows *China Daily's* July 2022 **response**

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20220729225039/https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202207/05/WS62c3fec5a310fd2b29e6a846.html>).

to research carried out by Dr. Laura Murphy and Nyrola Elima at the Helena Kennedy Centre, who they claim have links to both the U.S. Department of Justice and terrorists.

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