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# Full text: Respecting and Protecting the Rights of All Ethnic Groups in Xinjiang

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## **Respecting and Protecting the Rights of All Ethnic Groups in Xinjiang**

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## Preface

Full realization of human rights is one of the great dreams of all humanity, and a goal to which the people of China, including those of the ethnic groups in Xinjiang, have long aspired.

Xinjiang has been home to numerous ethnic groups since remote antiquity, and all the groups in the region are closely related members of the broader family of the Chinese nation. In 60 BC, the Western Han Dynasty set up the Western Regions Frontier Command, and Xinjiang was formally incorporated into the territory of China, becoming an integral part of this unified multiethnic country.

Before the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the people of Xinjiang suffered oppression from invading imperialist forces, the feudal exploiting class and the privileged religious hierarchy. At the bottom of the social ladder, they were deprived of basic human rights.

In 1949, the Chinese people led by the Communist Party of China (CPC) overthrew the forces of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism, and founded the PRC. The people of Xinjiang, together with the rest of the country, were liberated and became masters of their own country.

The PRC regards equality, unity and common prosperity for all ethnic groups as the basic requirements for managing ethnic affairs and handling ethnic relations. It established the system of regional ethnic autonomy in areas inhabited by ethnic minorities in compact communities. By 1954, Xinjiang had established five autonomous prefectures and six autonomous counties. In 1955, the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region was founded. The establishment of these autonomous divisions effectively guaranteed the democratic rights of people in Xinjiang to be masters of their own affairs, and started a new era of socialist ethnic relations characterized by equality, unity,

mutual assistance and harmony. Xinjiang ushered in a new stage of economic and social development, and better protection of human rights.

For more than 70 years since 1949, the CPC and the Chinese government have upheld a people-centered approach to human rights protection, treating the rights to subsistence and development as the primary human rights.

Integrating the principle of universal human rights with the country's realities, China has enriched its strategy for the governance of Xinjiang with the following guidelines: governing Xinjiang in accordance with the law, maintaining stability in the region through ethnic unity, nourishing the cultures of Xinjiang, promoting prosperity among the local population, and developing Xinjiang from a long-term perspective. In this process, China has given priority to securing and improving people's wellbeing, advanced various undertakings in Xinjiang, and shared the fruits of reform and development with people of all ethnic groups, so as to guarantee their equal rights to participation and development. Thanks to these efforts, human rights have made steady progress in Xinjiang.

## I. Civil Rights

All ethnic groups of the People's Republic of China enjoy equality. All citizens, regardless of ethnicity, gender, occupation, level of education, and religious belief, share the civil rights prescribed by the Constitution and the law on an equal footing.

**The right to life is guaranteed.** The right to life is an inherent right of humanity, and no person can be arbitrarily deprived of this right. For some time, under the influence of the evolving international situation and the spread of terrorism and extremism around the world, terrorist forces at home and abroad claiming to represent "East Turkistan" have colluded to spread religious extremism behind the smokescreen of ethnicity and religion, taking advantage of people's ethnic and religious feelings. They have incited hatred and discrimination, advocated violence, and plotted and carried out thousands of terrorist acts, resulting in the deaths of large numbers of innocent people

and hundreds of police officers. These acts have seriously endangered the lives of people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang and trampled on human dignity.

In the face of such a severe and complex situation and the urgent need to combat terrorism, Xinjiang has promulgated two local regulations – the Measures on Implementing the Counter-Terrorism Law and the Regulations on Deradicalization. This has been done in full accordance with China's Constitution, Criminal Law, Criminal Procedure Law, National Security Law, and Counter-Terrorism Law, and by taking into account the actual conditions in the region. The purpose of the local regulations is to strike hard at terrorist activities that infringe upon human rights and endanger public security, and at illegal and criminal activities that make use of extremism to undermine the law.

Xinjiang attaches importance to preventing terrorism at its source. It has carried out preventive counter-terrorism measures, including the establishment of vocational education and training centers, to protect basic rights. For more than four years since the end of 2016 there has been no terrorist incident in Xinjiang. The infiltration of extremism has been effectively curbed, and the right to life of people of all ethnic groups has been fully protected.

**Liberty is respected and protected.** Liberty is the inviolable right of citizens to carry out whatever activities they wish within the confines of the law. Religious extremists regard those who do not follow extremist practices as "infidels". They insinuate religious extremism into people's daily lives, inciting and forcing women to wear burqas and men to wear long beards in the name of religion. They try to persuade people not to watch TV, listen to the radio, read newspapers, cry at funerals, or laugh at weddings, and forbid them to sing and dance. They abuse the halal concept to interfere with daily routines and people's right to choose their way of life.

To prevent the infringement of civil liberties, Xinjiang has taken resolute measures to combat extremism, in full accordance with the Constitution, laws and regulations. It has carried out publicity and education campaigns on the rule of law to safeguard the public's right to personal liberty. Citizens, regardless of ethnicity and belief, are free to move, choose their own jobs, and lead the lives they choose as far as the law permits without external interference or constraint. At the same time, Xinjiang has made great efforts to operate radio and television stations, publish newspapers and magazines, and build internet infrastructure and various online platforms, so that citizens can enjoy their right to freedom of expression through smoother channels and in more diverse and convenient ways.

**The right to a fair trial is well maintained.** Impartiality is the lifeline of the rule of law. Xinjiang's judicial organs pursue social fairness and justice, which are the values of the rule of law. They promote reform to establish a criminal litigation system centering on trials, fully protect the right to a fair trial at all stages from investigation to prosecution, trial, and enforcement of court rulings, and strive to ensure that all people, whatever their ethnic background, experience a sense of fairness and justice in every judicial case.

To provide the public with better access to litigation, the judicial authorities have set up 74 circuit courts, 103 Fengqiao-style [In the early 1960s, the officials and citizenry of Fengqiao Town in Zhejiang Province created the Fengqiao practice, which emphasized solving problems in situ rather than passing them up to higher authorities. The practice has developed over the intervening decades, and is now a model for promoting community-level governance and social harmony.] courts, and 1,645 service stations, circuit trial centers, and offices for case consultations with judges. The average trial period has been shortened by 21.6 days, and the rate of cases ended at first instance is 90.8 percent. In 2020, courts at various levels in Xinjiang heard 604,900 cases, and concluded 587,400 of them, with a settlement rate of 97.1 percent.

Technological tools such as mobile e-court, cloud court trial, and smart enforcement of court rulings are used to file cases online and across geographical boundaries, hold remote court sessions, and mediate online, so that people can engage in legal action without leaving their homes.

Xinjiang has also improved its judicial assistance system to ensure that people in need have access to judicial relief. Courts at all levels in Xinjiang handled and concluded 545 cases of state compensation and judicial relief, and deferred, reduced or exempted litigation costs to a value of RMB26.1 million for needy litigants. In order to fully protect the public's right to information, they have established a platform for judicial openness to release timely information on the hearing of cases and enforcement of court rulings. They are also working to achieve full coverage of lawyers' service in criminal cases to guarantee the right of defense to suspects and defendants.

## II. Political Rights

All ethnic groups in Xinjiang, regardless of their population, history, development level and customs, have equal status. They all enjoy the democratic right to participate in the administration of state and local affairs and in community-level self-governance.

**A system of regional ethnic autonomy is in place.** This system is a basic component of China's political system. Under the unified leadership of the state, regional autonomy is practiced in areas where ethnic minority groups live in compact communities. Organs of self-government are established to exercise autonomy in accordance with the law. Regional ethnic autonomy and autonomous areas are not the exclusive possession of any ethnic group.

Xinjiang practices regional autonomy in five prefectures: Bayingol Mongolian Autonomous Prefecture, Bortala Mongolian Autonomous Prefecture, Kizilsu Kirgiz Autonomous Prefecture, Changji Hui Autonomous Prefecture, and Ili

Kazak Autonomous Prefecture; and in six counties: Yanqi Hui Autonomous County, Qapqal Xibe Autonomous County, Mori Kazak Autonomous County, Hoboksar Mongolian Autonomous County, Tashkurgan Tajik Autonomous County, and Barkol Kazak Autonomous County.

All the autonomous areas exercise the power to govern their respective local affairs, and participate as equals in the administration of state affairs. According to the Constitution and relevant state laws, the legislature of an autonomous region, while exercising the powers of a provincial-level administrative division, has the power to enact regulations on the exercise of regional autonomy and other particular regulations in line with local conditions.

Since 1979, the People's Congress of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and its Standing Committee have formulated a total of 669 local regulations, with 161 currently in effect. They have passed 54 resolutions and decisions with regulatory functions or on major issues, and approved 239 separate regulations and other local regulations submitted by prefecture-level cities, autonomous prefectures or autonomous counties.

**The right to vote and stand for election is institutionalized.** As stipulated by the Constitution and laws, Chinese citizens of any ethnic origin have the right to vote and stand for election. The principles in elections are: universal suffrage, equality, combination of direct and indirect elections, and multi-candidate election [In elections for national and local people's congresses, the number of candidates for election must exceed the number of posts available.]. Citizens of all ethnic groups in the autonomous region directly elect deputies to the people's congresses at county and township levels, who then elect deputies to each succeeding level, from the prefecture-level congress, through the congress of the autonomous region, to the National People's Congress (NPC).



The 13th NPC has 61 deputies from Xinjiang, of whom 38 (62.3 percent) are from ethnic minority groups. The NPC Standing Committee also has ethnic minority members from Xinjiang. The 13th People's Congress of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region is formed by 548 deputies, of whom 353 (64.4 percent) are of ethnic minority origins. Xinjiang now has 2,488 deputies to prefecture-level people's congresses (including 1,349 of ethnic minority origins, 54.2 percent), 16,960 deputies to county-level people's congresses (including 10,025 of ethnic minority origins, 59.1 percent), and 43,204 deputies to township-level people's congresses (including 31,739 of ethnic minority origins, 73.5 percent).

**The right to participate in the deliberation and administration of state and local affairs is guaranteed.** Xinjiang is the only region in China that has autonomous areas at all the three levels – region, prefecture and county. People's congresses and people's governments of ethnic autonomous areas exercise autonomy to administer local affairs. The chair of the autonomous region, the governors of autonomous prefectures, and the heads of autonomous counties are all citizens from the local ethnic groups exercising regional autonomy.

Within the framework of consultative democracy, the local committees of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) in Xinjiang encourage people from all walks of life and different ethnic groups to participate in state and local affairs. The committees provide timely, accurate, and efficient reporting on public opinion, and guarantee that the people of all ethnic groups enjoy their right to participate in political consultation and democratic supervision.

The 13th CPPCC National Committee has 34 members from Xinjiang, of whom 18 (52.9 percent) are from ethnic minority groups. The 12th Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region Committee of the CPPCC has 502 members, of whom 236 (47 percent) are from ethnic minority groups. As of March 2021, the 12th Xinjiang Committee of the CPPCC had submitted a total of 2,588



proposals covering politics, the economy, culture, education, science and technology, public wellbeing and other fields.

**Community-level self-governance is guaranteed in accordance with the law.** Community-level self-governance is a major channel of grassroots democracy in China, and the most effective way to spread as widely as possible the right of the people to be the masters of the country. A number of local regulations provide the legal basis for protecting grassroots democratic rights in the region, including Measures on Implementing the Organic Law of the Urban Residents Committees, Measures on Implementing the Organic Law of the Villagers Committees, Procedures on the Election of the Villagers Committee, and Measures on Making Village Affairs Transparent.

Xinjiang currently has 3,389 urban residents committees and 8,906 villagers committees to run public or welfare affairs, mediate disputes, assist in safeguarding social stability within their respective jurisdictions, and report on the opinions, requests and proposals of residents and villagers to relevant people's governments or their detached agencies. Almost all communities in both urban and rural areas throughout Xinjiang have formulated codes of conduct for citizens. Their capacity to manage their own affairs by involving the local residents in educating and serving the community and exercising public scrutiny is steadily improving.

### **III. Economic Rights**

Upholding a people-centered philosophy, Xinjiang pursues rapid economic and social development. More effort and investment have been made to improve the people's wellbeing. All ethnic groups enjoy equal opportunities and economic rights, and are developing the region together and building better lives.

**Equal right to economic development is guaranteed.** The right to development is an inalienable human right, and the essential precondition for

the realization of all human rights. Since the PRC was founded in 1949, the people of Xinjiang have been working hard together and have achieved a historic transformation – with many undertakings starting from scratch and now thriving – from extreme poverty to moderate prosperity in all respects. Agriculture and animal husbandry have developed and modernized; industries have grown rapidly with the integrative application of information, digital and smart technologies; the service sector has seen its status and role expand as a driver of economic growth. All ethnic groups enjoy equal rights to participation and development, moving steadily towards the goal of common prosperity.

From 1955 to 2020, Xinjiang's GDP soared from RMB1.2 billion to RMB1.4 trillion, and its per capita GDP rose from RMB241 to RMB53,593, a notable increase of about 160 times and 30 times at constant prices. From 1978 to 2020, the per capita disposable income of urban residents rose from RMB319 to RMB34,838, and that of rural residents from RMB119 to RMB14,056, both representing an increase of over 100 times.

**Extreme poverty has been eradicated.** Poverty is a major problem that plagues humanity, and poverty eradication is the most arduous global human rights cause in the contemporary era. Historical and natural factors have led to Xinjiang being long underdeveloped, with a large poor population.

The Hotan, Kashgar, and Aksu prefectures and the Kizilsu Kirgiz Autonomous Prefecture in southern Xinjiang suffered from a harsh environment, weak economic foundations, and seriously inadequate opportunities for employment. Ranked by the state as severely impoverished areas, they presented the toughest challenge in China's fight against poverty. Supported by the central government and the region's partners in the national paired assistance program, Xinjiang has adopted poverty alleviation measures to help the poor, such as developing businesses, creating job opportunities, improving education and health care, renovating dilapidated rural houses, and relocating

the poor from inhospitable areas. These measures have proved effective and remarkable results have been achieved.

By the end of 2020, more than 2.7 million rural people in Xinjiang living below the current poverty line had emerged from poverty, and 3,666 villages and 32 counties were no longer classified as poor. Rural residents in poor areas have seen rapid growth in both incomes and consumption spending. Their per capita disposable income was RMB13,052 in 2020, an average annual increase of 10.8 percent since 2012; their per capital consumption spending was RMB9,007 in 2020, an average annual increase of 9 percent since 2013. The poor population's rights to subsistence and development have been guaranteed.

**Basic standard of living is enhanced.** The right to a basic standard of living ensures human dignity. Xinjiang spends more than 70 percent of its general public budget every year on ensuring and improving people's wellbeing. It has carried out a raft of programs to benefit the local people, significantly improving their lives in all respects. From having their basic needs met to enjoying decent lives, the people of Xinjiang have experienced a historic leap in their standard of living. Durable consumer goods, once absent in the past, are now widely available, showing how consumption is growing in quantity and quality.

During the 13th Five-year Plan period (2016-2020), a total of 1.2 million rural dwellings for low-income families were completed, and construction started on 1.3 million urban affordable housing units, benefiting millions of people. All villages have access to asphalt and concrete roads, bus services, three-phase power, and broadband services. Expressways and high-speed railways have been built from scratch, and the former cover all prefectures and cities. Twenty-two civil airports have been completed and opened, the highest among all provincial-level administrative units in China. Modern vehicles and communication tools have become common in both urban and rural

households. Every effort is being made to ensure the provision of express delivery services in every village.

**The right to work is protected.** Work provides the means for people to subsist. Everyone has the right to work and create a better life. Xinjiang has made employment the priority among its measures for improving the people's wellbeing. It has adopted a pro-employment strategy, encouraging individual initiative, leveraging market mechanisms, providing government support, and promoting entrepreneurship.

The local government has ramped up efforts in vocational training. To increase the employability of workers, it has worked to boost professional competence and skills training by developing vocational education institutions, such as vocational and technical colleges, secondary technical schools, technician training schools, employment training centers, training centers for enterprise employees, and vocational education and training centers.

Xinjiang has provided additional support to severely impoverished areas, and to key groups including university graduates, surplus urban and rural labor, workers from poor families, people experiencing difficulties in finding work, and rural women. It has provided dynamic, categorized and targeted assistance to people with employment difficulties and zero-employment families so as to ensure that each family has at least one member in work. Workers' job preferences are fully respected, and structured conditions have been created for people to find jobs locally, to seek work in urban areas, or to start their own businesses. Almost all those with the ability to work have been provided with jobs.

From 2014 to 2020, the total employed population in Xinjiang grew from 11.4 million to 13.6 million, up by nearly 20 percent. The urban employed population grew by an annual average of 470,000, of which 149,000, or nearly 32 percent, were in southern Xinjiang. An average of 2.8 million urban job

opportunities were provided annually to the surplus rural workforce, of which 1.7 million, or more than 60 percent, were offered to those in southern Xinjiang.

While promoting employment, Xinjiang guarantees legitimate labor rights and interests in accordance with the law, such as equal employment opportunities, remuneration, social insurance, rest and leave, and occupational safety. It has put in place a supervisory system to protect labor rights and interests, addressing reports and complaints concerning wage arrears, failure to provide labor contracts, and other infringements. Judicial authorities, human resource and social security departments, and trade union organizations have worked closely to investigate and correct infringements of labor rights and interests. Labor rights protection has been constantly improved in Xinjiang.

## IV. Cultural Rights

Xinjiang attaches great importance to documenting and protecting its excellent traditional ethnic cultures, to ensure that they are passed on to succeeding generations. It has continued its efforts to improve the quality of public cultural services and promote the use of standard Chinese. It encourages ethnic groups to learn spoken and written languages from each other, and takes solid measures to ensure the right to education.

**Xinjiang's fine traditional ethnic cultures are protected.** The splendid Chinese civilization was created by all ethnic groups of China, and the ethnic cultures are an inseparable part of Chinese culture. China's Law on the Protection of Cultural Relics and Law on Intangible Cultural Heritage, and Xinjiang's local measures and regulations on implementing these laws have laid down a solid legal framework for protecting the ethnic cultures in the region.

Cultural heritage is under effective protection. The ancient city ruins of Gaochang, Jiaohe and Beiting, Kizil Caves, Kizilgaha Beacon Tower, and

Subash Temple Ruins have been included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, collectively known as the “Silk Roads: the Routes Network of Chang’an-Tianshan Corridor”. The Uygur Muqam of Xinjiang and the Kirgiz epic Manas were inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The Uygur Meshrep was included on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. All ethnic groups in Xinjiang have items on the national and autonomous regional representative lists of intangible cultural heritage, and there are 133 key cultural heritage sites under state protection.

The cultural traditions of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang are protected. Folk cultural events, such as the Han Lantern Festival, the Uygur Meshrep, the Kazak Aytes, the Kirgiz Kobuz Ballad Singing Fair, the Mongolian Nadam Fair, and the Hui Hua’er Folk Song Festival are widely celebrated. Traditional local sports are flourishing and sports meetings of all kinds are held across the region. Competitions and events involving wrestling, horse racing, archery, the Buzkashi (horseback competition for possession of a goat) and the Darwaz (Uygur tightrope walking) are held on traditional holidays and enjoyed by people from all ethnic groups. The local government has supported the creation of works of ethnic literature and the translation of literature between Han and ethnic minority languages, expanding cultural exchanges and integration among the ethnic groups.

**The diversity of spoken and written languages is ensured.** In accordance with the Constitution, the Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy, and the Law on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language, the state promotes the nationwide use of Putonghua as the standard spoken language, ensures the right to learn and use the standard spoken and written Chinese language, and provides the conditions to guarantee this. At the same time, all ethnic groups have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages.

Xinjiang promotes standard Chinese, and encourages ethnic groups to learn spoken and written languages from each other, so as to promote communication and unity among all peoples in the region. Currently, more than 10 spoken and written languages are used among the ethnic groups in Xinjiang. Ethnic minority languages are extensively used in such areas as judicature, administration, education, press and publishing, radio and television, literature and art, and public affairs.

Primary and secondary schools provide courses on ethnic minority languages. Citizens of all ethnic groups have the right to use their own language in elections and court proceedings. When performing official duties, Party and government institutions of autonomous areas at the county level and above use standard Chinese together with the languages of the ethnic minority groups that exercise regional autonomy.

Six spoken and written languages – standard Chinese, Uygur, Kazak, Kirgiz, Mongolian and Xibe – are used in newspapers, books, audio and video products, and e-publications in the region. Xinjiang publishes more than 100 newspapers, including 52 in ethnic minority languages, and over 200 periodicals, including 120 in ethnic minority languages. Xinjiang Radio and Television Station airs TV programs in four languages and radio programs in five languages. Xinjiang Daily is printed in four languages. Tianshannet ([www.ts.cn](http://www.ts.cn)) and other web portals can be accessed in multiple ethnic languages. Multilingual public signs and services are available at shops, post and telecommunication offices, medical institutions, and transport facilities.

**The right to education is fully protected.** The right to education is a basic right ensured by the state. With support from the central government, Xinjiang has taken all necessary measures to develop education, sharing the benefits of educational progress equally among all ethnic groups. In 2020, the gross enrollment rate of preschool institutions reached 98.2 percent, the completion rate of nine-year compulsory education was 95.7 percent, and the gross enrollment rate of senior high schools reached 98.9 percent.



In Hotan, Kashgar, Aksu, and the Kizilsu Kirgiz Autonomous Prefecture in southern Xinjiang, free education is available covering 15 years from kindergarten to senior high school. All villages in Xinjiang have kindergartens where children have free breakfast and lunch. With timely help from the government, students from poor families have all been able to continue their schooling. More boarding schools have been built in towns and townships to help children in remote farming and pastoral areas to attend school. Funding for education has steadily increased. In 2020, public education expenditure reached RMB102 billion, including RMB9.1 billion of direct subsidies for 6.7 million students. By 2020, 160,200 students from Xinjiang, including 138,500 ethnic minority students, had received senior high school or secondary vocational education at classes designed for them in more developed areas of the country.

A modern vocational education system has been established in Xinjiang. There are now 37 vocational and technical colleges, including 3 key colleges at the national level and 11 key colleges at the regional level, and 147 secondary vocational schools, including 11 key schools at the regional level. Higher education in Xinjiang is also improving. It now has 56 regular universities, with a total of 2.1 million graduates by 2020, including 767,000 ethnic minority graduates.

Public cultural services have been improved. Xinjiang is moving faster to build a modern public cultural services network characterized by equal access and rich content and variety, meeting the needs of local people. With strong support from the central government, Xinjiang has made sure that all villages have access to radio and TV programs and that all households have access to direct broadcast satellite services. Other public cultural services projects include giving free books and other publications across the region, renovating county-level cultural centers and libraries, building a public database for cultural resources sharing, and building township-level cultural centers.

By 2019, Xinjiang had 112 public libraries, 106 museums and memorial halls, 29 science and technology museums, 60 art museums, 130 county-level cultural centers and 1,350 township-level cultural centers, and 102 radio and television stations (covering 98.7 percent and 98.9 percent of the population). Its public cultural services network covers five levels – autonomous region, prefecture/city, county/district/county-level city, township/sub-district, and village/community.

Cultural centers, libraries, museums, and other cultural amenities are open to the public free of charge. Almost every household has access to radio and TV programs, and people in rural areas can watch films and visit small libraries in their villages. Both urban and rural residents enjoy a variety of cultural activities. Art and literature are flourishing with an abundance of excellent works. Every year Xinjiang publishes more than 10,000 different newspapers, periodicals, books, audio and video products, and e-publications, and translates over 5,000 episodes of TV series and cartoons into ethnic minority languages.

The internet is becoming a new space for people to study, work and relax, and a new platform for them to access public services. In 2020 Xinjiang had 9,318 websites, 8.8 million fixed broadband subscribers, and 23.6 million mobile internet users.

## V. Social Rights

Xinjiang has established a social security system that covers all the local population. There has been a marked improvement in the region's capacity to provide health services and its response to public health emergencies. People can access social assistance in a timely manner. Reproductive rights for ethnic minorities are guaranteed.

**Social security has been strengthened.** A multi-layered basic social security system with wide coverage is now in place, including old-age

insurance, medical insurance, work-related injury insurance, unemployment insurance, and subsistence allowances.

In 2011 Xinjiang took the lead in establishing basic old-age and medical insurance schemes that cover all local residents and bring urban and rural areas under unified management, realizing universal access to basic social security in the region. Poor people are guaranteed affordable medical services through basic medical insurance, serious illness insurance, and medical assistance.

Under the national plan to ensure universal access to social security, the actual coverage of basic old-age insurance for urban and rural residents in Xinjiang stands above 95 percent. Unemployment, work-related injury and maternity insurance schemes have been extended to cover all occupational groups. All poor people are now covered by basic medical, old-age and serious illness insurance.

As of 2020, 5.9 million people were covered by basic old-age insurance for urban employees, 7.3 million by basic old-age insurance for rural and non-working urban residents, 23.2 million by medical insurance, 3 million by unemployment insurance, and 3.5 million by work-related injury insurance. A total of 293,000 urban residents and nearly 1.7 million rural residents were in receipt of subsistence allowances.

In 2020, the average monthly subsistence allowance for urban residents increased to RMB500 per capita, and the average annual subsistence allowance for rural residents increased to RMB4,100 per capita, growing by more than 180 percent and almost 400 percent compared to 2010.

The basic pension benefits are adjusted as required. Retired enterprise employees have seen their pensions increase over the years, and their benefits in 2020 were 4.6 times higher than in 2005. In 2020, a total of RMB9.4 billion

was issued as relief fund to about 2 million needy people in both urban and rural areas.

**Covid-19 has been effectively brought under control.** Always prioritizing the health and safety of the people, Xinjiang has taken targeted measures to keep inbound and local transmission under control, and has adopted a science-based approach to treating patients.

It has provided universal access to free nucleic acid testing and vaccination. A monthly allowance of RMB450 is provided to needy people who have no income or other sources of support due to the epidemic. Emergency relief funds have been established at the sub-district/township level to ensure timely response. Social assistance and subsistence allowances are adjusted when the Consumer Price Index fluctuates beyond a certain range, and temporary price subsidies are issued as required. In 2020, some 3.9 million victims of illness, natural disasters and the epidemic received RMB2.1 billion of temporary relief subsidies.

**Health services have been markedly improved.** Health is an essential factor in leading a happy life. Putting people's health first, Xinjiang is taking measures to implement the Healthy China initiative, improve the health services network covering both urban and rural areas, and provide health services of higher quality.

As of 2019, Xinjiang had 18,376 medical institutions with 186,426 beds. There were 7.4 beds and 2.7 doctors per thousand people.

A health services network is now in place to serve communities in urban and rural areas. All township-level health centers and village clinics meet the required standards, and all villages have doctors. A public health information platform has been opened and local platforms across the region are managed and regulated in accordance with unified standards.

Telemedical services are available at all medical institutions at the county, prefecture, and autonomous region levels, and 85 percent of township and community health centers. Greater use of the internet is giving more people access to family doctors, to nursing services by online reservation, to medical consultation through video link, and to other new internet-based health services.

Fourteen forms of basic public health service are provided to urban and rural residents for free, covering almost the whole life cycle. A fund for health checkups was set up in 2016, into which RMB8.2 billion has been injected to date, so that every resident in Xinjiang can have a free annual health checkup to spot early signs of illnesses. Major epidemics and endemics have been brought under control.

People with rural hukou (resident registration) can be admitted and receive treatment at any designated medical institution in counties, districts, cities, and prefectures before settling their bills, and the settlement is managed on a one-stop basis. This has made hospital trips more convenient and affordable. Major efforts have been made to pair up 56 hospitals in poor counties in Xinjiang with 63 leading hospitals in the region and other parts of the country, to step up medical services and hospital management in impoverished areas. The people of Xinjiang now enjoy better health with improved health services. The average life expectancy grew from 30 years in 1949 to 74.7 years in 2019.

**The reproductive rights of ethnic minorities are duly guaranteed.** According to the Constitution and relevant laws, all citizens have reproductive rights and both husband and wife have the duty to practice family planning. Family planning is a basic national policy, with an emphasis on reproductive health, and prenatal, postnatal and early-life care. It has a direct bearing on gender equality, women's empowerment, poverty reduction, and sustainable development.

The application of family planning measures in China was gradually extended from coastal and inland to border regions, from urban to rural areas, and from the Han people to ethnic minorities. Preferential policies were implemented for ethnic minorities. In line with local conditions and in accordance with the state's laws and regulations, Xinjiang formulated its own family planning policies. Family planning was first applied to the Han people in the region in the early 1970s, but until the mid and late 1980s, ethnic minorities were not subject to this policy. The Measures on Family Planning released by the autonomous region in 1992 stipulated that urban Han residents could have one child per couple and those residing in rural and pastoral areas could have two, while for ethnic minorities, urban residents could have two children per couple and those in rural and pastoral areas could have three. Ethnic minority groups with relatively smaller populations were not required to follow the family planning policy. This was one of the major reasons why the ethnic minority populations in Xinjiang maintained a fast growth rate.

In parallel with the region's economic and social development, the different ethnic groups began to develop similar expectations in terms of family structure, so Xinjiang amended the Regulations on Population and Family Planning in 2017, introducing universal family planning policies for all ethnic groups: two children per couple for urban residents and three per couple for rural residents. In line with the national adjustments to laws and policies regarding population and family planning, Xinjiang will further modify and improve relevant local regulations and policies.

## **VI. Rights of Women and Children**

Respect for women and protection of children are signs of social progress. Xinjiang attaches great importance to work related to women and children. It strives to solve the prominent problems they encounter, and promotes steady progress in the relevant undertakings. The legitimate rights and interests of women and children are effectively protected.

**Emphasis is placed on improving the status of women.** Xinjiang upholds the constitutional principle of equality between men and women and guarantees the right of women to participate in democratic decision-making, management and supervision of governance and social affairs.

The region attaches importance to the training and selection of female officials, and the number of women participating in the administration of public affairs has continued to grow, from 16,338 in early 1955 to 460,600 in 2019. In early 2020, there were 13 female deputies to the NPC (22.4 percent of Xinjiang's total), and 146 female deputies to the autonomous regional people's congress (27.2 percent). Among the members of the CPPCC National Committee living in Xinjiang, eight are women (23.5 percent).

Women are playing a growing role in grassroots democracy and business management. In 2020, women took 64.7 percent of the seats in urban residents committees, and 30.5 percent in villagers committees. Xinjiang guarantees women's equality in employment and their right to equal pay for equal work. The number of women in employment continues to expand. In 2019, 480,900 new urban jobs were created, of which 228,100 were taken up by women, accounting for 47.4 percent of the total. Women are now playing an important role in various fields, and their social and family status has improved notably.

**Women's rights and interests are effectively protected.** Xinjiang has implemented a health program available to all women in the region, and provided free screening for breast and cervical cancer. Women's health services and conditions have improved markedly. From 2000 to 2020, the rate of prenatal care increased from 80.1 percent to 98.5 percent, and the rate of hospital deliveries from 59.7 percent to 99.8 percent.

The local authorities in Xinjiang carry out family planning in accordance with the law. They provide quality and accessible reproductive health services, and it is up to individuals to decide whether or not to use contraceptives and how



to use them. With economic and social development and higher living standards in Xinjiang, views on childbearing have changed significantly. Local people generally choose to marry later and have fewer and healthier children. Xinjiang gives full play to the role of women's federations in safeguarding women's legitimate rights and interests. They listen to women's voices, reflect their concerns, give them support in their work and life, and help resolve women's rights issues. There is an active campaign to prevent and stop domestic violence against women. In 2020, Xinjiang formulated and enforced the Measures on Implementing the Anti-Domestic Violence Law. There are now 226 shelters for abused women and children in the region, which provide legal advice, psychological counseling and temporary social assistance to women who are unable to go home after suffering from domestic violence.

**Children's rights and interests are effectively protected.** Prioritizing children's wellbeing, Xinjiang has improved the services available to children at county, township and village levels, and fully guaranteed children's rights to subsistence and development. As a result, programs for children have made considerable progress.

Children's health care has improved remarkably. The infant mortality rate dropped from 23.5 per thousand in 2000 to 6.75 per thousand in 2020. Xinjiang has continued to implement a program to improve children's nutrition, providing free nutrition packages to rural children under school age, thus comprehensively improving children's health and nutrition. Vaccination coverage among children in Xinjiang remains at a high level, with over 90 percent coverage under the national immunization program, and the region's ability to prevent childhood diseases has been strengthened. In 2020, BCG vaccination coverage was 99.4 percent, polio (third dose) 99.6 percent, and DPT (third dose) 97.4 percent.

Xinjiang has established an assistance and protection mechanism for urban and rural children in need, including mandatory reporting, emergency response, assessment and assistance, and guardianship intervention. It has

improved the system of assistance, management, family reunion, and resettlement for street children. Xinjiang has also fully implemented institutional care of orphans. The average monthly living allowance for orphans raised by child welfare institutions rose from RMB900 per person in 2012 (RMB1,000 per person in the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, and RMB900 per person in other parts of Xinjiang) to RMB1,100 per person in 2020.

Xinjiang has strengthened the legal framework for protecting children and set up 73 legal aid stations for minors. It ensures that children with disabilities receive compulsory education in regular schools or special education schools, or are taught by teachers in their homes. At the end of 2020, there were 28,000 children with disabilities studying at compulsory education institutions, with a gross enrollment rate of 98.5 percent. The region has 32 special education schools with 5,000 students. There are now 165 rehabilitation centers for children with disabilities. A total of 2,850 children received rehabilitation assistance in 2020.

## **VII. Freedom of Religious Belief**

Respect for and protection of freedom of religious belief is a basic and long-term national policy of the Chinese government. Subject to the principles of protecting lawful practices, proscribing illegal activities, containing extremism, resisting infiltration, and punishing crime, the local government of Xinjiang fully applies the policy, protecting legitimate religious activities and ensuring the public's freedom of religious belief in accordance with the law.

**Freedom of religious belief is guaranteed by law.** This freedom is a basic right of citizens. The Constitution stipulates that citizens of the People's Republic of China shall enjoy freedom of religious belief, and that the state shall protect normal religious activities. In Xinjiang, people have the freedom to believe in or not believe in any religion, to believe in one religion in

preference to another, to believe in any sect of the same religion, to abandon their past beliefs, and to become believers at their chosen time.

No organization or individual may compel citizens to believe in or not believe in any religion; nor may they discriminate against citizens who believe in or do not believe in any religion. Anyone who infringes upon the freedom of religious belief will be held legally liable. No citizen may suffer discrimination or unfair treatment for practicing or not practicing any religion.

**Lawful religious practices are protected.** There are many religions in Xinjiang, including Islam, Buddhism, Taoism, and Protestant, Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Religious activities such as attending religious services, worshipping Buddha, attending Mass, praying, and reciting scriptures are managed by religious groups and the believers themselves. Such activities are protected by law, and no organization or individual may interfere with them.

The China Islamic Association makes arrangements every year for practicing Muslims to go on pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia. It funds medical care and interpretation for pilgrims, and offers other services to ensure safe and orderly travel.

Religious activities are held on every major religious festival. During the holy Islamic month of Ramadan, whether to close or open halal restaurants is completely determined by the owners themselves without interference. During the Covid-19 epidemic, virus prevention and control measures were taken at all the venues to ensure that worship, fasting, and other activities continued in a stable and orderly manner.

**Channels for believers to gain religious knowledge are guaranteed.** With state support, the religious classics of Islam, Buddhism, Taoism, and Christianity have been translated and published in multiple languages. Extensive material from ancient religious books and documents has been collated and published. Such publications include the *Tripitaka*,

*Taoist Canon of China*, and *Collected Editions of Dao De Jing*. The Bible has been published in standard Chinese and 11 ethnic minority languages, as well as in Braille. Currently, more than 40 Islamic publications in different ethnic minority languages are distributed in Xinjiang. The Quran and *Selections from Sahih al-Bukhari* have been published in standard Chinese, Uygur, Kazak and Kirgiz languages. The *New Collection of al-Wa'z Speeches* series have been compiled and published in both Chinese and the Uygur language. Special government funds have been allocated to protect ancient religious texts, such as the Quran, the Sira, and *Maitrisimit nom bitig*. Many ancient religious books, including the *Tales of the Prophets (Qisas al-anbiya)*, Volume II of the *Golden Light Sutra*, and *Maitrisimit nom bitig*, have been included in the *Catalog of National Rare Books of China*.

The China Islamic Association operates both Chinese and Uygur versions of its website. Any individual can study religion through legal channels.

**Facilities and conditions of venues for religious activities have been improved.** Such venues are protected in accordance with the law. Special government funds have been allocated to maintain and renovate venues listed as cultural heritage sites under the protection of the state and the autonomous region, including the Id Kah Mosque in Kashgar, Shengyou Lamasery in Zhaosu, Baytulla Mosque in Yining, Baluntai Monastery in Hejing, Jiaman Mosque in Hotan, and Yanghang Mosque in Urumqi.

In terms of venues that have fallen into disrepair, the government departments concerned, complying with the Law on Urban and Rural Planning and respecting the wishes of religious believers, have resolved potential safety hazards through reconstruction, relocation or expansion, thus ensuring the safe and orderly practice of religion.

Conditions continue to improve at the venues for religious activities. Mosques are generally equipped with running water, electricity, natural gas, and easy road access. The mosques also have communication tools, radio and television facilities, LED screens, computers, electric fans, air conditioners, water

dispensers, medical services, and fire-fighting appliances. Washing and cleansing facilities have been installed in congregational mosques for Juma prayers. All this provides greater convenience for religious believers.

**The system for training Islamic clerics has been reinforced.** Islamic clerics in Xinjiang are trained at China Islamic Institute, Xinjiang Islamic Institute, and Xinjiang Islamic School. The government has invested more than RMB200 million to build a new campus of the Xinjiang Islamic Institute, which opened in 2017. The institute also has eight new branches in Ili, Changji, Urumqi, Turpan, Aksu, Kizilsu, Kashgar and Hotan. They form a comprehensive training system for clerics.

Xinjiang has made training plans and identified objectives in accordance with the principle of targeted and demand-oriented training. A group of high-caliber Islamic clerics have been trained, to ensure that Islam is practiced and carried on in a sound and orderly manner. To date, the China Islamic Institute and the Xinjiang Islamic Institute and its branches have trained more than 4,000 students.

## Conclusion

Achieving equality is one of the constant goals of humanity. Ethnic equality is one of the fundamental principles on which China is founded. The CPC always takes it as its mission to bring equality and happiness to the people, and over the years has identified the path with Chinese characteristics as the best approach to ethnic affairs. As a result, all ethnic groups in China enjoy true equal rights.

The Chinese government actively fulfills its obligations under the international human rights conventions to which China has signed up. It makes full use of its institutional strengths, pools the efforts of all sectors of society, and promotes the rapid development of all undertakings in Xinjiang.

The local government honors the constitutional principle of respecting and protecting human rights. The ethnic groups in Xinjiang unite and work together to achieve common development and prosperity. The political, economic, social, cultural, and many other rights of the people of every ethnic group are effectively guaranteed.

Currently, rumors, distortions, and complete fabrications are being spread by some foreign media and politicians. This is a calculated campaign to undermine the Chinese government's enormous efforts to protect ethnic equality, and misrepresent the historic progress that has been made on human rights in the region. Their goals are to discredit China, interfere in China's internal affairs, restrict China's development, and destroy stability and prosperity in Xinjiang. This has aroused indignation among the people in Xinjiang and the rest of China, and is condemned by those in the international community who seek to uphold justice.

Xinjiang is now a stable and orderly society, where the local ethnic groups live in mutual harmony and peace. It is experiencing an optimal period of development. Under the firm leadership of the CPC Central Committee with Xi Jinping at the core, Xinjiang has achieved moderate prosperity in all respects together with the rest of the country, and has embarked on a new journey of building China into a modern socialist country. This will better ensure ethnic equality, and all the people of Xinjiang will enjoy a happier and more prosperous life.

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