Ethnic Cleansing of the Uyghur:
Human Rights Violations in the Xinjiang Province/East Turkestan

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Abstract

The Uyghur people, a diverse and culturally rich population, are facing genocide and horrific human rights violations at the hands of the Chinese government. The world must act swiftly to prevent the catastrophic fallout that will have impact for generations (Wood, 2020).

Introduction

The Uyghurs are now predominantly Muslim and located in the unrecognized region of East Turkestan. The United Nations acknowledges this land as the Xinjiang province of China, where the Uyghur are an ethnic minority. The Chinese government has implemented cultural and ethnic cleansing among the Uyghur, under the guise of preventing violence and terrorism. Acts have included banning fasting during Ramadan, forced alcohol consumption, erasing Uyghur history and culture from school curriculum, and destroying cultural centers and mosques (The Soufan Center, 2020).

Acts of Genocide

The UN uses the following 5 features to define genocide:

1. Killing group members
2. Causing serious bodily/mental harm to group members
3. Intentionally inflicting harm on the group, conditions designed to cause physical destruction
4. Forced birth control
5. Forced transfer of children

(United Nations, 2020)

These atrocities are being applied to the Uyghur population by the Chinese government in efforts to eradicate this group (saveuyghur.org, 2020)

Map

KAZAKHSTAN   RUSSIA

XINJIANG

Urumqi   MONGOLIA   JAPAN
Turpan
Kashgar   Beijing
CHINA   Shanghai   East China Sea
INDIA   Hong Kong   PACIFIC OCEAN
200 miles   South China Sea

Xinjiang region
Total population
23.98m

Ethnic breakdown
Uighur   11.45m
Han Chinese   8.27
Kazakh   1.59
Hui   1.02
Kyrgyz   0.2
Others   1.45

The Times, 2020

Statement of the Problem

- China gained control of the region in 1949

- Resource rich area and key connection between China and central Asia

- Population: approximately 21 million

- Uyghur's cultural identity is more connected to its neighbors to the west, rather than the communist values in China

- China provided funding to encourage movement to the area in attempts to dilute the Uyghur population

- The Uyghurs were increasingly marginalized until riots broke out when they demanded equality

- In 2017, the Chinese government began invasive surveillance and opened "re-education camps"

(World Without Genocide, 2020)

Problem Development

- Economic incentives for Han Chinese denied to the Uyghur
- Marginalization of the Uyghur

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- Justification of mass surveillance
- Unlawful detainment

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Detained for: growing a beard, fasting during Ramadan, refusing to smoke or drink alcohol, praying, contacting family abroad

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- Detained in "re-education camps"
- Forced alcohol consumption and force feeding to prevent fasting
- Physical and psychological abuse
- Isolation
- Forced contraception and sterilization
- Women imprisoned for giving birth

Psychological Consequences

- PTSD
- Collective trauma
- Impact of trans-generational identity, including post-traumatic worldview
- Adverse physical health outcomes through generations (Bezo et al., 2018)
- Cognitive impacts – memory, learning, executive functioning (Bianchette et al., 2018)
- Societal trauma can be greater than the sum of the individual traumas

Discussion & Recommendations

The Uyghur are a peaceful and spiritual people who have existed in the region for centuries and pose no threat to China or any of the neighboring countries. In a time where politics are sensationalized, and affiliations are spoken of with dogmatic overtones, we as a global society must not sacrifice our humanity.

- Journalists must be allowed to report on the internment camps and move freely in the Xinjiang province.
- The United Nations and its members must actively speak out and condemn the genocide of the Uyghur.
- Policy reform is imperative to protect this population and send a universal message that human rights hold more value than political agendas.

For every child that is separated from their family, every religious building destroyed, every freedom stripped, and every lineage broken, the world loses more of its humanity.

References

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