

AP



CHINA CRACKS DOWN – THE UIGHURS

By DAKE KANG and COLLEAGUES

Associated Press

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1. CHINA CUTS UIGHUR BIRTHS WITH IUDS, ABORTION, STERILIZATION

June 29, 2020: A state-orchestrated campaign is slashing births among the minority Uighurs of China's far west Xinjiang region with brutal efficiency. <https://apnews.com/article/269b3de1af34e17c1941a514f78d764c>

 **Video:** CHINA FORCES BIRTH CONTROL TO SUPPRESS MINORITIES

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=exAbNOo0Azc&feature=emb_title

2. GADGETS FOR TECH GIANTS MADE WITH COERCED UIGHUR LABOR

March 7, 2020: The connection between a supplier that owns a Nanchang factory and tech giant Apple is the latest sign that companies outside China are benefiting from coercive labor practices imposed on the Uighurs. <https://apnews.com/article/3f9a92b8dfd3cae379b57622dd801dd5>

3. CHINA'S 'WAR ON TERROR' UPROOTS FAMILIES, LEAKED DATA SHOWS

Feb 17, 2020: When a Chinese government mass detention campaign engulfed Memtimin Emer's native Xinjiang region three years ago, it wasn't just the elderly imam who was locked away – three of his sons were as well. <https://apnews.com/890b79866c9eb1451ddf67b121272ee2>

June 29, 2020

China cuts Uighur births with IUDs, abortion, sterilization



Mukhit Toktassyn • AP

Alif Baqytali plays on a tricycle at his home in Shonzhly, Kazakhstan . Baqytali's mother, Gulnar Omirzakh, a Chinese-born ethnic Kazakh, says she was forced to get an IUD against her will.

By ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Chinese government is taking draconian measures to slash birth rates among Uighurs and other minorities as part of a sweeping campaign to curb its Muslim population, even as it encourages some of the country's Han majority to have more children.

While individual women have spoken out before about forced birth control, the practice is far more widespread and systematic than previously known, according to an AP investigation based on government statistics, state documents and interviews with 30 ex-detainees, family members and a

former detention camp instructor. The campaign over the past four years in the far west region of Xinjiang is leading to what some experts are calling a form of “demographic genocide.”

The state regularly subjects minority women to pregnancy checks, and forces intrauterine devices, sterilization and even abortion on hundreds of thousands, the interviews and data show. Even while the use of IUDs and sterilization has fallen nationwide, it is rising sharply in Xinjiang.

The population control measures are backed by mass detention both as a threat and as a punishment for failure to comply. Having too many children is a major reason people are sent to detention camps, the AP found, with the parents of three or more ripped away from their families unless they can pay huge fines. Police raid homes, terrifying parents as they search for hidden children.

After Gulnar Omirzakh, a Chinese-born Kazakh, had her third child, the government ordered her to get an IUD inserted. Two years later, in January 2018, four officials in military camouflage came knocking at her door anyway. They gave Omirzakh, the penniless wife of a detained vegetable trader, three days to pay a \$2,685 fine for having more than two children.

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If she didn’t, they warned, she would join her husband and a million other ethnic minorities locked up in internment camps — often for having too many children.

“God bequeaths children on you. To prevent people from having children is wrong,” said Omirzakh, who tears up even now thinking back to that day. “They want to destroy us as a people.”

The result of the birth control campaign is a climate of terror around having children, as seen in interview after interview. Birth rates in the mostly Uighur regions of Hotan and Kashgar plunged by more than 60% from 2015 to 2018, the latest year available in government statistics. Across the Xinjiang region, birth rates continue to plummet, falling nearly 24% last year alone — compared to just 4.2% nationwide, statistics show.

The hundreds of millions of dollars the government pours into birth control has transformed Xinjiang from one of China’s fastest-growing regions to among its slowest in just a few years, according to new research obtained by The Associated Press in advance of publication by China scholar Adrian Zenz.

“This kind of drop is unprecedented....there’s a ruthlessness to it,” said



Mukhit Toktassyn • AP



Alif Baqytali hugs his mother, gulnar Omirzakh, at their new home in Shonzhy, Kazakhstan.

Left: People line up at the Artux City Vocational Skills Education Training Service Center in western China's Xinjiang region.

Zenz, a leading expert in the policing of China's minority regions. "This is part of a wider control campaign to subjugate the Uighurs."

U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo denounced the policies in a statement Monday.

"We call on the Chinese Communist Party to immediately end these horrific practices," he said.

China's foreign minister derided the story as "fabricated" and "fake news," saying the government treats all ethnicities equally and protects the legal rights of minorities.

"Everyone, regardless of whether they're an ethnic minority or Han Chinese, must follow and act in accordance with the law," ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said Monday when asked about the AP story.

Chinese officials have said in the past that the new measures are merely

meant to be fair, allowing both Han Chinese and ethnic minorities the same number of children.

For decades, China had one of the most extensive systems of minority entitlements in the world, with Uighurs and others getting more points on college entrance exams, hiring quotas for government posts and laxer birth control restrictions. Under China's now-abandoned 'one child' policy, the authorities had long encouraged, often forced, contraceptives, sterilization and abortion on Han Chinese. But minorities were allowed two children — three if they came from the countryside.

Under President Xi Jinping, China's most authoritarian leader in decades, those benefits are now being rolled back. In 2014, soon after Xi visited Xinjiang, the region's top official said it was time to implement "equal family planning policies" for all ethnicities and "reduce and stabilize birth rates." In the following years, the government declared that instead of just one child, Han Chinese could now have two, and three in Xinjiang's rural areas, just like minorities.

But while equal on paper, in practice Han Chinese are largely spared the abortions, sterilizations, IUD insertions and detentions for having too many children that are forced on Xinjiang's other ethnicities, interviews and data show. Some rural Muslims, like Omirzakh, are punished even for having the three children allowed by the law.

State-backed scholars have warned for years that large rural religious families were at the root of bombings, knifings and other attacks the Xinjiang government blamed on Islamic terrorists. The growing Muslim population was a breeding ground for poverty and extremism which could "heighten political risk," according to a 2017 paper by the head of the Institute of Sociology at the Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences. Another cited as a key obstacle the religious belief that "the fetus is a gift from God."

Outside experts say the birth control campaign is part of a state-orchestrated assault on the Uighurs to purge them of their faith and identity and forcibly assimilate them. They're subjected to political and religious re-education in camps and forced labor in factories, while their children are indoctrinated in orphanages. Uighurs, who are often but not always Muslim, are also tracked by a vast digital surveillance apparatus.

"The intention may not be to fully eliminate the Uighur population, but it

Outside experts say the birth control campaign is part of a state-orchestrated assault on the Uighurs to purge them of their faith and identity and forcibly assimilate them.

will sharply diminish their vitality,” said Darren Byler, an expert on Uighurs at the University of Colorado. “It will make them easier to assimilate into the mainstream Chinese population.”

Some go a step further.

“It’s genocide, full stop. It’s not immediate, shocking, mass-killing on the spot type genocide, but it’s slow, painful, creeping genocide,” said Joanne Smith Finley, who works at Newcastle University in the U.K. “These are direct means of genetically reducing the Uighur population.”

FOR CENTURIES, the majority was Muslim in the arid, landlocked region China now calls “Xinjiang” — meaning “New Frontier” in Mandarin.

After the People’s Liberation Army swept through in 1949, China’s new Communist rulers ordered thousands of soldiers to settle in Xinjiang, pushing the Han population from 6.7% that year to more than 40% by 1980. The move sowed anxiety about Chinese migration that persists to this day. Drastic efforts to restrict birth rates in the 1990s were relaxed after major pushback, with many parents paying bribes or registering children as the offspring of friends or other family members.

That all changed with an unprecedented crackdown starting in 2017, throwing hundreds of thousands of people into prisons and camps for



Mukhit Toktassyn • AP

Gulnar Omirzakh, second right, and her husband, Baqytali Nur, third right, eat lunch with friends and family at their home in Shonzhy, Kazakhstan on Saturday, June 13, 2020.

alleged “signs of religious extremism” such as traveling abroad, praying or using foreign social media. Authorities launched what several notices called “dragnet-style” investigations to root out parents with too many children, even those who gave birth decades ago.

“Leave no blind spots,” said two county and township directives in 2018 and 2019 uncovered by Zenz, who is also an independent contractor with the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, a bipartisan nonprofit based in Washington, D.C. “Contain illegal births and lower fertility levels,” said a third.

Officials and armed police began pounding on doors, looking for kids and pregnant women. Minority residents were ordered to attend weekly flag-raising ceremonies, where officials threatened detention if they didn’t register all their children, according to interviews backed by attendance slips and booklets. Notices found by the AP show that local governments set up or expanded systems to reward those who report illegal births.

Officials and armed police began pounding on doors, looking for kids and pregnant women.

In some areas, women were ordered to take gynecology exams after the ceremonies, they said. In others, officials outfitted special rooms with ultrasound scanners for pregnancy tests.

“Test all who need to be tested,” ordered a township directive from 2018. “Detect and deal with those who violate policies early.”

Abdushukur Umar was among the first to fall victim to the crackdown on children. A jovial Uighur tractor driver-turned-fruit merchant, the proud father considered his seven children a blessing from God.

But authorities began pursuing him in 2016. The following year, he was thrown into a camp and later sentenced to seven years in prison — one for each child, authorities told relatives.

“My cousin spent all his time taking care of his family, he never took part in any political movements,” Zuhra Sultan, Umar’s cousin, said from exile in Turkey. “How can you get seven years in prison for having too many children? We’re living in the 21st century — this is unimaginable.”

Sixteen Uighurs and Kazakhs told the AP they knew people interned or jailed for having too many children. Many received years, even decades in prison.

Leaked data obtained and corroborated by the AP showed that of 484 camp detainees listed in Karakax county in Xinjiang, 149 were there for having too many children - the most common reason for holding them. Time



Ng Han Guan • AP



(Above) Uighur children play outdoors in Hotan, in western China's Xinjiang region.

(Left) A receipt for a fine levied on Zumert Dawut, a Uighur woman, for having too many children. She was fined 18,600 RMB (\$2,600) for having a third child and forcibly sterilized after being released from a Xinjiang detention camp.

in a camp — what the government calls “education and training” — for parents with too many children is written policy in at least three counties, notices found by Zenz confirmed.

In 2017, the Xinjiang government also tripled the already hefty fines for violating family planning laws for even the poorest residents — to at least three times the annual disposable income of the county. While fines also apply to Han Chinese, only minorities are sent to the detention camps if they cannot pay, according to interviews and data. Government reports show the counties collect millions of dollars from the fines each year.

In other efforts to change the population balance of Xinjiang, China is dangling land, jobs and economic subsidies to lure Han migrants there. It is also aggressively promoting intermarriage between Han Chinese and Uighurs, with one couple telling the AP they were given money for housing and

amenities like a washing machine, refrigerator and TV.

“It links back to China’s long history of dabbling in eugenics....you don’t want people who are poorly educated, marginal minorities breeding quickly,” said James Leibold, a specialist in Chinese ethnic policy at La Trobe in Melbourne. “What you want is your educated Han to increase their birth rate.”

Sultan describes how the policy looks to Uighurs like her: “The Chinese government wants to control the Uighur population and make us fewer and fewer, until we disappear.”

ONCE IN THE DETENTION CAMPS, women are subjected to forced IUDs and what appear to be pregnancy prevention shots, according to former detainees. They are also made to attend lectures on how many children they should have.

Seven former detainees told the AP that they were force-fed birth control pills or injected with fluids, often with no explanation. Many felt dizzy, tired or ill, and women stopped getting their periods. After being released and leaving China, some went to get medical check-ups and found they were sterile.

It’s unclear what former detainees were injected with, but Xinjiang hospital slides obtained by the AP show that pregnancy prevention injections, sometimes with the hormonal medication Depo-Provera, are a common family planning measure. Side effects can include headaches and dizziness.

Dina Nurdybay, a Kazakh woman, was detained in a camp which separated married and unmarried women. The married women were given pregnancy tests, Nurdybay recalled, and forced to have IUDs installed if they had children. She was spared because she was unmarried and childless.

One day in February 2018, one of her cellmates, a Uighur woman, had to give a speech confessing what guards called her “crimes.” When a visiting official peered through the iron bars of their cell, she recited her lines in halting Mandarin.

“I gave birth to too many children,” she said. “It shows I’m uneducated and know little about the law.”

“Do you think it’s fair that Han people are only allowed to have one child?” the official asked, according to Nurdybay. “You ethnic minorities are shameless, wild and uncivilized.”

Nurdybay met at least two others in the camps whom she learned were

The married women were given pregnancy tests, Nurdybay recalled, and forced to have IUDs installed if they had children.

locked up for having too many children. Later, she was transferred to another facility with an orphanage that housed hundreds of children, including those with parents detained for giving birth too many times. The children counted the days until they could see their parents on rare visits.

“They told me they wanted to hug their parents, but they were not allowed,” she said. “They always looked very sad.”

Another former detainee, Tursunay Ziyawudun, said she was injected until she stopped having her period, and kicked repeatedly in the lower stomach during interrogations. She now can’t have children and often doubles over in pain, bleeding from her womb, she said.

Ziyawudun and the 40 other women in her “class” were forced to attend family planning lectures most Wednesdays, where films were screened about impoverished women struggling to feed many children. Married women were rewarded for good behavior with conjugal visits from their husbands, along with showers, towels, and two hours in a bedroom. But there was a catch – they had to take birth control pills beforehand.

Some women have even reported forced abortions. Ziyawudun said a “teacher” at her camp told women they would face abortions if found pregnant during gynecology exams.

A woman in another class turned out to be pregnant and disappeared from



Andy Wong • AP

A Uighur child plays alone in the courtyard of a home at the Unity New Village in Hotan, in western China's Xinjiang region. The hundreds of millions of dollars the government pours into birth control have transformed Xinjiang from one of China's fastest-growing regions into one of its slowest.

the camp, she said. She added that two of her cousins who were pregnant got rid of their children on their own because they were so afraid.

Another woman, Gulbahar Jelilova, confirmed that detainees in her camp were forced to abort their children. She also saw a new mother, still leaking breast milk, who did not know what had happened to her infant. And she met doctors and medical students who were detained for helping Uighurs dodge the system and give birth at home.

In December 2017, on a visit from Kazakhstan back to China, Gulzia Mogdin was taken to a hospital after police found WhatsApp on her phone. A urine sample revealed she was two months pregnant with her third child. Officials told Mogdin she needed to get an abortion and threatened to detain her brother if she didn't.

During the procedure, medics inserted an electric vacuum into her womb and sucked her fetus out of her body. She was taken home and told to rest, as they planned to take her to a camp.

Months later, Mogdin made it back to Kazakhstan, where her husband lives.

“That baby was going to be the only baby we had together,” said Mogdin, who had recently remarried. “I cannot sleep. It's terribly unfair.”

THE SUCCESS OF CHINA'S PUSH to control births among Muslim minorities shows up in the numbers for IUDs and sterilization.

In 2014, just over 200,000 IUDs were inserted in Xinjiang. By 2018, that jumped more than 60 percent to nearly 330,000 IUDs. At the same time, IUD use tumbled elsewhere in China, as many women began getting the devices removed.

A former teacher drafted to work as an instructor at a detention camp described her experience with IUDs to the AP.

She said it started with flag-raising assemblies at her compound in the beginning of 2017, where officials made Uighur residents recite “anti-terror” lessons. They chanted, “If we have too many children, we're religious extremists....That means we have to go to the training centers.”

Police rounded up over 180 parents with too many children until “not a single one was left,” she said. At night, she said, she lay in bed, stiff with terror, as officers with guns and tasers hauled her neighbors away. From time to time police pounded on her door and searched her apartment for Qurans, knives, prayer mats and of course children, she said.

“Your heart would leap out of your chest,” she said.



Nathan Ellgren • AP

Zumret Dawut, a Uighur woman from China's far western Xinjiang region, holds a phone with a picture of her kids at her home in Woodbridge, Va., on Monday, June 15, 2020.

Then, that August, officials in the teacher's compound were told to install IUDs on all women of childbearing age. She protested, saying she was nearly 50 with just one child and no plans to have more. Officials threatened to drag her to a police station and strap her to an iron chair for interrogation.

She was forced into a bus with four armed officers and taken to a hospital where hundreds of Uighur women lined up in silence, waiting for IUDs to be inserted. Some wept quietly, but nobody dared say a word because of the surveillance cameras hanging overhead.

Her IUD was designed to be irremovable without special instruments. The first 15 days, she got headaches and nonstop menstrual bleeding.

"I couldn't eat properly, I couldn't sleep properly. It gave me huge psychological pressure," she said. "Only Uighurs had to wear it."

Chinese health statistics also show a sterilization boom in Xinjiang. Budget documents obtained by Zenz show that starting in 2016, the

Xinjiang government began pumping tens of millions of dollars into a birth control surgery program and cash incentives for women to get sterilized. While sterilization rates plunged in the rest of the country, they surged seven-fold in Xinjiang from 2016 to 2018, to more than 60,000 procedures. The Uighur-majority city of Hotan budgeted for 14,872 sterilizations in 2019 — over 34% of all married women of childbearing age, Zenz found.

Even within Xinjiang, policies vary widely, being harsher in the heavily Uighur south than the Han-majority north. In Shihezi, a Han-dominated city where Uighurs make up less than 2% of the population, the government subsidizes baby formula and hospital birth services to encourage more children, state media reported.

Zumret Dawut got no such benefits. In 2018, the mother of three was locked in a camp for two months for having an American visa.

When she returned home under house arrest, officials forced her to get gynecology exams every month, along with all other Uighur women in her compound. Han women were exempted. They warned that if she didn't take what they called "free examinations," she could end up back in the camp.

One day, they turned up with a list of at least 200 Uighur women in her compound with more than two children who had to get sterilized, Dawut recalled.

"My Han Chinese neighbors, they sympathized with us Uighurs," Dawut said. "They told me, 'oh, you're suffering terribly, the government is going way too far!'"

Dawut protested, but police again threatened to send her back to the camp. During the sterilization procedure, Han Chinese doctors injected her with anesthesia and tied her fallopian tubes — a permanent operation. When Dawut came to, she felt her womb ache.

"I was so angry," she said. "I wanted another son."

LOOKING BACK, Omirzakh considers herself lucky.

After that frigid day when officials threatened to lock her up, Omirzakh called relatives around the clock. Hours before the deadline, she scraped together enough money to pay the fine from the sale of her sister's cow and high-interest loans, leaving her deep in debt.

For the next year, Omirzakh attended classes with the wives of others

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detained for having too many children. She and her children lived with two local party officials sent specially to spy on them. When her husband was finally released, they fled for Kazakhstan with just a few bundles of blankets and clothes.

The IUD still in Omirzakh's womb has now sunk into her flesh, causing inflammation and piercing back pain, "like being stabbed with a knife." For Omirzakh, it's a bitter reminder of everything she's lost — and the plight of those she left behind.

"People there are now terrified of giving birth," she said. "When I think of the word 'Xinjiang,' I can still feel that fear."

March 7, 2020

Gadgets for tech giants made with coerced Uighur labor



Ng Han Guan • AP

In this June 5, 2019, photo, residents of the Hui Muslim ethnic minority walk in a neighborhood near an OFILM factory in Nanchang in eastern China's Jiangxi province.

By DAKE KANG and YANAN WANG

Associated Press

NANCHANG, China — In a lively Muslim quarter of Nanchang city, a sprawling Chinese factory turns out computer screens, cameras and fingerprint scanners for a supplier to international tech giants such as Apple and Lenovo. Throughout the neighborhood, women in headscarves stroll through the streets, and Arabic signs advertise halal supermarkets and noodle shops.

Yet the mostly Muslim ethnic Uighurs who labor in the factory are

isolated within a walled compound that is fortified with security cameras and guards at the entrance. Their forays out are limited to rare chaperoned trips, they are not allowed to worship or cover their heads, and they must attend special classes in the evenings, according to former and current workers and shopkeepers in the area.

The connection between OFILM, the supplier that owns the Nanchang factory, and the tech giants is the latest sign that companies outside China are benefiting from coercive labor practices imposed on the Uighurs, a Turkic ethnic group, and other minorities.

Over the past four years, the Chinese government has detained more than a million people from the far west Xinjiang region, most of them Uighurs, in internment camps and prisons where they go through forced ideological and behavioral re-education. China has long suspected the Uighurs of harboring separatist tendencies because of their distinct culture, language and religion.

When detainees “graduate” from the camps, documents show, many are sent to work in factories. A dozen Uighurs and Kazakhs told the AP they knew people who were sent by the state to work in factories in China’s east, known as inner China _ some from the camps, some plucked from their families, some from vocational schools. Most were sent by force, although in a few cases it wasn’t clear if they consented.



Ng Han Guan • AP

Neighborhood residents chat near the entrance to an OFILM factory in Nanchang in eastern China's Jiangxi province.

Workers are often enrolled in classes where state-sponsored teachers give lessons in Mandarin, China’s dominant language, or politics and “ethnic unity.” Conditions in the jobs vary in terms of pay and restrictions.

At the OFILM factory, Uighurs are paid the same as other workers but otherwise treated differently, according to residents of the neighborhood. They are not allowed to leave or pray – unlike the Hui Muslim migrants also working there, who are considered less of a threat by the Chinese government.

“They don’t let them worship inside,” said a Hui Muslim woman who worked in the factory for several weeks alongside the Uighurs. “They don’t let them come out.”

“If you’re Uighur, you’re only allowed outside twice a month,” a small business owner who spoke with the workers confirmed. The AP is not disclosing the names of those interviewed near the factory out of concern for possible retribution. “The government chose them to come to OFILM, they didn’t choose it.”

The Chinese government says the labor program is a way to train Uighurs and other minorities and give them jobs. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Monday called concern over possible coerced labor under the program “groundless” and “slander.”

However, experts say that like the internment camps, the program is part of a broader assault on the Uighur culture, breaking up social and family links by sending people far from their homes to be assimilated into the dominant Han Chinese culture.

“They think these people are poorly educated, isolated, backwards, can’t speak Mandarin,” said James Leibold, a scholar of Chinese ethnic policy at La Trobe University in Melbourne. “So what do you do? You ‘educate’ them, you find ways to transform them in your own image. Bringing them into the Han Chinese heartland is a way to turbocharge this transformation.”

OFILM’s website indicates the Xinjiang workers make screens, camera cover lenses and fingerprint scanners. It touts customers including Apple, Samsung, Lenovo, Dell, HP, LG and Huawei, although there was no way for the AP to track specific products to specific companies.

Apple’s most recent list of suppliers, published January last year, includes three OFILM factories in Nanchang. It’s unclear whether the specific OFILM factory the AP visited twice in Nanchang supplies Apple, but it has the same address as one listed. Another OFILM factory is located about half a

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Ng Han Guan • AP

In this Feb. 26, 2020, photo, a woman uses her phone near the Apple store in Beijing.

mile away on a different street. Apple did not answer repeated requests for clarification on which factory it uses.

In an email, Apple said its code of conduct requires suppliers to “provide channels that encourage employees to voice concerns.” It said it interviews the employees of suppliers during annual assessments in their local language without their managers present, and had done 44,000 interviews in 2018.

Lenovo confirmed that it sources screens, cameras, and fingerprint scanners from OFILM but said it was not aware of the allegations and would investigate. Lenovo also pointed to a 2018 audit by the Reliable Business Alliance in which OFILM scored very well.

All the companies that responded said they required suppliers to follow strict labor standards. LG and Dell said they had “no evidence” of forced labor in their supply chains but would investigate, as did Huawei. HP did not respond.

OFILM also lists as customers dozens of companies within China, as well as international companies it calls “partners” without specifying what product it offers. And it supplies PAR Technology, an American sales systems vendor to which it most recently shipped 48 cartons of touch screens in February, according to U.S. customs data obtained through ImportGenius and Panjiva, which track shipping data.

PAR Technology in turn says it supplies terminals to major chains such as

McDonald's, Taco Bell, and Subway. However, the AP was unable to confirm that products from OFILM end up with the fast food companies.

McDonald's said it has asked PAR Technology to discontinue purchases from OFILM while it launches an immediate investigation. PAR Technology also said it would investigate immediately. Subway and Taco Bell did not respond.

A report Sunday from the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, researched separately from the AP, estimated that more than 80,000 Uighurs were transferred from Xinjiang to factories across China between 2017 and 2019. The report said it found "conditions that strongly suggest forced labor" consistent with International Labor Organization definitions.

The AP also reported a year ago that Uighur forced labor was being used within Xinjiang to make sportswear that ended up in the U.S.

FROM FARMERS TO FACTORY WORKERS

Beijing first sent Uighurs to work in inland China in the early 2000s, as part of a broad effort to push minorities to adopt urban lifestyles and integrate with the Han Chinese majority to tighten political control.

At first the program targeted young, single women, because the state worried that Uighur women raised in pious Muslim families didn't work, had children early and refused to marry Han men. But as stories of poor pay and tight restrictions trickled back, police began threatening some parents with jail time if they didn't send their children, six Uighurs told the AP.

The program was halted in 2009, when at least two Uighurs died in a brawl with Han workers at a toy factory in coastal Guangdong province. After peaceful protests in Xinjiang were met with police fire, ethnic riots broke out that killed an estimated 200 people, mostly Han Chinese civilians.

An AP review of Chinese academic papers and state media reports shows that officials blamed the failure of the labor program on the Uighurs' language and culture. So when the government ramped up the program again after the ascent of hardline Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2012, it emphasized ideological transformation.

A paper drafted by the head of the Xinjiang statistics bureau in 2014 said the Uighurs' poor Mandarin made it hard for them to integrate in inner China. It concluded that Xinjiang's rural minorities needed to be broken away from traditional lifestyles and systematically "disciplined", "trained" and "instilled with modern values."

"The local saturated religious atmosphere and the long-time living habits

of ethnic minorities are incompatible with the requirements of modern industrial production,” the paper said. It outlined a need to “slowly correct misunderstandings about going out to choose jobs.”

Before Uighurs were transferred for jobs, the paper continued, they needed to be trained and assessed on their living habits and adoption of corporate culture.

“Those who fail will not be exported,” it said.

The paper also described government incentives such as tax breaks and subsidies for Chinese companies to take Uighurs. A 2014 draft contract for Xinjiang laborers in Guangdong province obtained by the AP shows the government there offered companies 3000 RMB (\$428.52) per worker, with an additional 1000 RMB (\$142.84) for “training” each person for no less than 60 class hours. In exchange, companies had to offer “concentrated accommodation areas,” halal canteens and “ethnic unity education and training.”

But it was a tough sell at a time when Chinese officials were grappling with knifings, bombings and car attacks by Uighurs, fueled by explosive anger at the government’s harsh security measures and religious restrictions. Hundreds died in race-related violence in Xinjiang, both Uighur and Han



Ng Han Guan • AP

A worker polishes iPhones in an Apple store in Beijing.

Chinese.

A labor agent who only gave his surname, Zhang, said he tried brokering deals to send Xinjiang workers to factories in the eastern city of Hangzhou, but finding companies willing to take Uighurs was a challenge, especially in a slowing economy.

“Their work efficiency is not high,” he said.

The size of the program is considerable. A November 2017 state media report said Hotan prefecture alone planned to send 20,000 people over two years to work in inner China.

There, the report said, they would “realize the dreams of their lives.”

ANSWERING THE GOVERNMENT'S CALL

The Uighurs at OFILM were sent there as part of the government’s labor program, in an arrangement the company’s website calls a “school-enterprise cooperative.” OFILM describes the workers as migrants organized by the government or vocational school students on “internships”.

OFILM confirmed it received AP requests for comment but did not reply.

The AP was unable to get inside the facility, and on one visit to Nanchang, plainclothes police tailed AP journalists by car and on foot. But posts on the company website extoll OFILM’s efforts to accommodate their Uighur workers with Mandarin and politics classes six days a week, along with halal food.

OFILM first hired Uighurs in 2017, recruiting over 3,000 young men and women in Xinjiang. They bring the Uighurs on one- or two-year contracts to Nanchang, a southeastern metropolis nearly two thousand miles from Xinjiang that local officials hope to turn into a tech hub.

OFILM is one of Nanchang’s biggest employers, with half a dozen factory complexes sprinkled across the city and close ties with the state. Investment funds backed by the Nanchang city government own large stakes in OFILM, corporate filings show. The Nanchang government told the AP that OFILM recruits minorities according to “voluntary selection by both parties” and provides equal pay along with personal and religious freedom.

OFILM’s website says the company “answered the government’s call” and went to Xinjiang to recruit minorities. The Uighurs need training, OFILM says, to pull them from poverty and help them “study and improve.”

Mandarin is heavily emphasized, the site says, as well as lessons in history and “ethnic unity” to “comprehensively improve their overall quality.” The site features pictures of Uighurs playing basketball on factory grounds, dancing in



Ng Han Guan • AP

Women from the the Hui Muslim ethnic minority from a nearby neighborhood gather outside a shop near an OFILM factory in Nanchang in eastern China's Jiangxi province.

a canteen and vying in a Mandarin speech competition.

In August, when OFILM organized celebrations for Eid Qurban, a major Islamic festival, Uighur employees did not pray at a mosque. Instead, they dressed in orange uniforms and gathered in a basketball court for a show with Communist officials called “Love the Motherland – Thank the Party.” An OFILM post said a “Uighur beauty” dazzled with her “beautiful exotic style.”

State media reports portray the Nanchang factory workers as rural and backwards before the Communist Party trained them, a common perception of the Uighurs among the Han Chinese.

“The workers’ concept of time was hazy, they would sleep in till whenever they wanted,” a Party official is quoted as saying in one. Now, he said, their “concept of time has undergone a total reversal.”

In the reports and OFILM posts, the Uighurs are portrayed as grateful to the Communist Party for sending them to inner China.

Despite the wan expressions of three OFILM workers from Lop County, a December 2017 report said they gave an “enthusiastic” presentation about how they lived in clean new dormitories “much better than home” and were visited by Communist Party cadres.

“We were overjoyed that leaders from the Lop County government still come to see us on holidays,” one of the workers, Estullah Ali, was quoted as

saying. “Many of us were moved to tears.”

THEY TOOK MY CHILD TO INNER CHINA

Minorities fleeing China describe a far grimmer situation. H., a wealthy jade merchant from Lop County, where OFILM now gets Uighur workers, began noticing the labor transfer program in 2014. That’s when state propaganda blaring through television and loudspeakers urged young Uighurs to work in inner China. Officials hustled families to a labor transfer office where they were forced to sign contracts, under threat of land confiscations and prison sentences.

H., identified only by the initial of his last name out of fear of retribution, was worried. The government was not only reviving the labor program but also clamping down on religion. Acquaintances vanished: Devout Muslims and language teachers, men with beards, women with headscarves.

Toward the end of 2015, when H. greeted his 72-year-old neighbor on the street, the man burst into tears.

“They took my child to inner China to work,” he said.

Months later, H. and his family fled China.

Zharqynbek Otan, a Chinese-born ethnic Kazakh, said that after he was released from an internment camp in 2018, neighbors in his home village also told him their sons and daughters were forced to sign contracts for 6 months to five years to work at factories near Shanghai. If they ran from the factories, they were warned, they’d be taken straight back to internment camps.

Nurlan Kokteubai, an ethnic Kazakh, said during his time in an internment camp, a cadre told him they selected young, strong people to work in inner Chinese factories in need of labor.

“He told us that those young people would acquire vocational skills,” Kokteubai said.

Not all workers are subject to the restrictions at OFILM. One ethnic Kazakh said her brother made power banks in central China for \$571.36 a month and didn’t take classes.

But another said two of his cousins were forced to go and work in cold, harsh conditions. They were promised \$428.52 a month but paid only \$42.85. Though they wanted to quit, four Uighurs who complained were detained in

Officials hustled families to a labor transfer office where they were forced to sign contracts, under threat of land confiscations and prison sentences.

camps after returning to Xinjiang, scaring others.

Uighurs and Kazakhs in exile say it's likely those working in inner China are still better off than those in camps or factories in Xinjiang, and that in the past, some had gone voluntarily to earn money. A former worker at Jiangxi Lianchuang Electronics, a lens maker in Nanchang, told The Associated Press the 300 or so Uighurs there were free to enter or leave their compound, although most live in dormitories inside factory grounds. He and a current worker said they were happy with their working conditions, their salary of about 5,000 RMB (\$714.20) a month, and their teachers and Mandarin classes in the evenings.

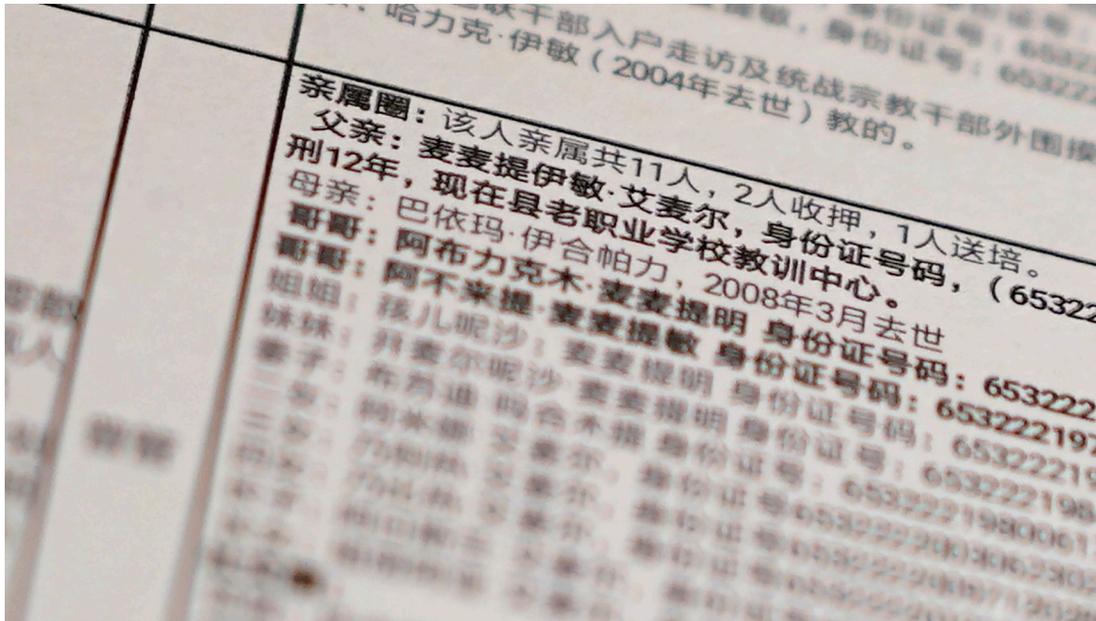
But when presented a list of questions in Uighur about the labor transfers, the former Jiangxi Lianchuang worker started to look very nervous. He asked for the list, then set it on fire with a lighter and dropped it in an ashtray.

“If the Communist Party hears this, then” – he knocked his wrists together, mimicking a suspect being handcuffed. “It’s very bad.”

Associated Press writer Erika Kinetz contributed to this report.

Feb. 17, 2020

China's 'War on Terror' uproots families, leaked data shows



• AP Photo

This Sunday, Feb. 16, 2020 photo shows details from a print of a leaked database obtained by The Associated Press. Text reads, "Family circle: Total relatives 11, 2 imprisoned, 1 sent to training, Father: Mementimin Emer... sentenced to 12 years, is now in the training center at the old vocational school." The database offers the fullest and most personal view yet into how Chinese officials decided who to put into and let out of detention camps.

By **DAKE KANG**

Associated Press

Beijing (AP) — For decades, the Uighur imam was a bedrock of his farming community in China's far west. On Fridays, he preached Islam as a religion of peace. On Sundays, he treated the sick with free herbal medicine. In the winter, he bought coal for the poor.

But as a Chinese government mass detention campaign engulfed Mementimin Emer's native Xinjiang region three years ago, the elderly imam was swept up and locked away, along with all three of his sons living in China.

Now, a newly revealed database exposes in extraordinary detail the main reasons for the detentions of Emer, his three sons, and hundreds of others in Karakax County: their religion and their family ties.

The database obtained by The Associated Press profiles the internment of 311 individuals with relatives abroad and lists information on more than 2,000 of their relatives, neighbors and friends. Each entry includes the detainee's name, address, national identity number, detention date and location, along with a detailed dossier on their family, religious and neighborhood background, the reason for detention, and a decision on whether or not to release them. Issued within the past year, the documents do not indicate which government department compiled them or for whom.

Taken as a whole, the information offers the fullest and most personal view yet into how Chinese officials decided who to put into and let out of detention camps, as part of a massive crackdown that has locked away more than a million ethnic minorities, most of them Muslims.

The database emphasizes that the Chinese government focused on religion as a reason for detention — not just political extremism, as authorities claim, but ordinary activities such as praying, attending a mosque, or even growing a long beard. It also shows the role of family: People with detained relatives are far more likely to end up in a camp themselves, uprooting and criminalizing entire families like Emer's in the process.

The database emphasizes that the Chinese government focused on religion as a reason for detention.

Similarly, family background and attitude is a bigger factor than detainee behavior in whether they are released.

“It's very clear that religious practice is being targeted,” said Darren Byler, a University of Colorado researcher studying the use of surveillance technology in Xinjiang. “They want to fragment society, to pull the families apart and make them much more vulnerable to retraining and reeducation.”

The Xinjiang regional government did not respond to faxes requesting comment. Asked whether Xinjiang is targeting religious people and their families, foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said “this kind of nonsense is not worth commenting on.”

Beijing has said before that the detention centers are for voluntary job training, and that it does not discriminate based on religion.

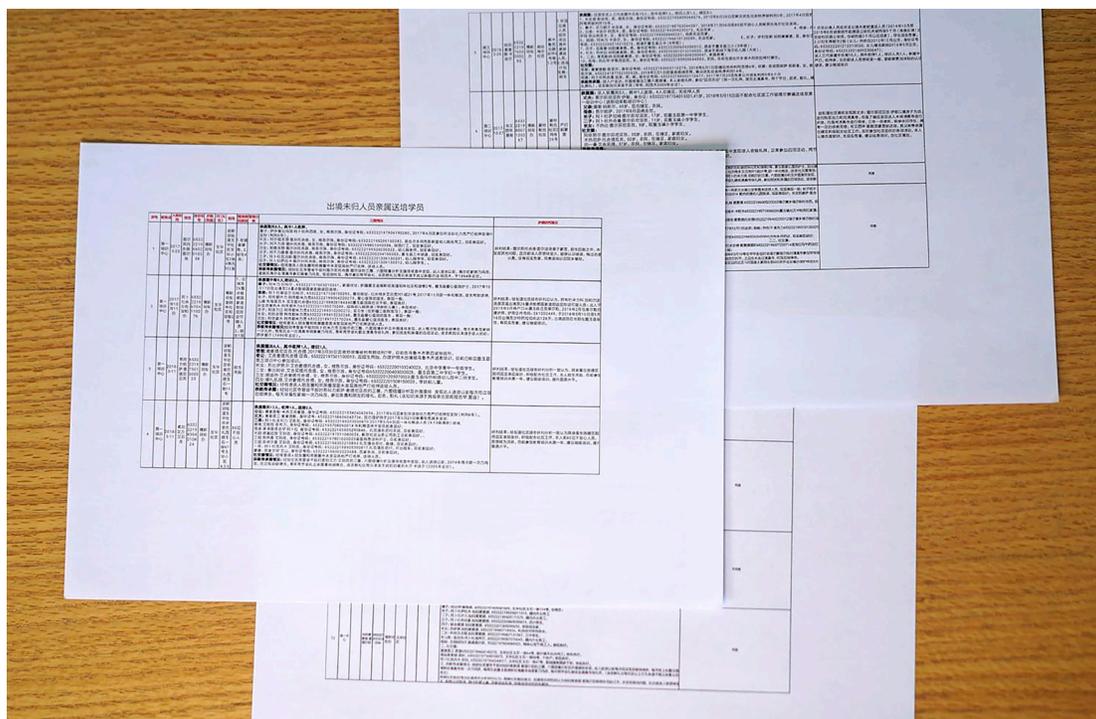
China has struggled for decades to control Xinjiang, where the native Uighurs have long resented Beijing's heavy-handed rule. With the 9/11 attacks

in the United States, officials began using the specter of terrorism to justify harsher religious restrictions, saying young Uighurs were susceptible to Islamic extremism.

After militants set off bombs at a train station in Xinjiang's capital in 2014, President Xi Jinping launched a so-called "People's War on Terror", transforming Xinjiang into a digital police state.

The leak of the database from sources in the Uighur exile community follows the release in November of a classified blueprint on how the mass detention system really works. The blueprint obtained by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, which includes the AP, showed that the centers are in fact forced ideological and behavioral re-education camps run in secret. Another set of documents leaked to the New York Times revealed the historical lead-up to the mass detention.

The latest set of documents came from sources in the Uighur exile community, and the most recent date in them is March 2019. The detainees listed come from Karakax County, a traditional settlement of about 650,000 on the edge of Xinjiang's Taklamakan desert where more than 97 percent of residents are Uighur. The list was corroborated through interviews with former Karakax residents, Chinese identity verification tools, and other lists and documents seen by the AP.



• AP Photo

The database obtained by The Associated Press offers the fullest and most personal view yet into how Chinese officials decided who to put into and let out of detention camps.

Detainees and their families are tracked and classified by rigid, well-defined categories. Households are designated as “trustworthy” or “not trustworthy,” and their attitudes are graded as “ordinary” or “good.” Families have “light” or “heavy” religious atmospheres, and the database keeps count of how many relatives of each detainee are locked in prison or sent to a “training center.”

Officials used these categories to determine how suspicious a person was — even if they hadn’t committed any crimes.

“It underscores the witch-hunt mindset of the government, and how the government criminalizes everything,” said Adrian Zenz, an expert on the detention centers and senior fellow at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation in Washington, D.C.

Reasons listed for internment include “minor religious infection,” “disturbs other persons by visiting them without reasons,” “relatives abroad,” “thinking is hard to grasp” and “untrustworthy person born in a certain decade.” The last seems to refer to younger men; about 31 percent of people considered “untrustworthy” were in the age bracket of 25 to 29 years, according to an analysis of the data by Zenz.

About 31 percent of people considered ‘untrustworthy’ were in the age bracket of 25 to 29 years, according to an analysis of the data by Zenz.

When former student Abdullah Muhammad spotted Emer’s name on the list of the detained, he was distraught.

“He didn’t deserve this,” Muhammad said. “Everyone liked and respected him. He was the kind of person who couldn’t stay silent against injustice.”

Even in Karakax county, famed for its intellectuals and scholars, Emer stood out as one of the most renowned teachers in the region. Muhammad studied the Quran under Emer for six years as a kid, following him from house to house in an effort to dodge the authorities. Muhammad said Emer was so respected that the police would phone him with warnings ahead of time before raiding classes at his modest, single-story home of brick and mud.

Though Emer gave Party-approved sermons, he refused to preach Communist propaganda, Muhammad said, eventually running into trouble with the authorities. He was stripped of his position as an imam and barred from teaching in 1997, amid unrest roiling the region.

When Muhammad left China for Saudi Arabia and Turkey in 2009, Emer was making his living as a doctor of traditional medicine. Emer was growing old, and under heavy surveillance, he had stopped attending

religious gatherings.

That didn't stop authorities from detaining the imam, who is in his eighties, and sentencing him on various charges for up to 12 years in prison over 2017 and 2018. The database cites four charges in various entries: "stirring up terrorism," acting as an unauthorized "wild" imam, following the strict Saudi Wahhabi sect and conducting illegal religious teachings.

Muhammad called the charges false. Emer had stopped his preaching, practiced a moderate Central Asian sect of Islam rather than Wahhabism and never dreamed of hurting others, let alone stirring up "terrorism," Muhammad said.

"He used to always preach against violence," Muhammad said. "Anyone who knew him can testify that he wasn't a religious extremist."

None of Emer's three sons had been convicted of a crime. But the database shows that over the course of 2017, all were thrown into the detention camps for having too many children, trying to travel abroad, being "untrustworthy" or "infected with religious extremism," or going on the Hajj, the Muslim pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca. It also shows that their relation to Emer and their religious background was enough to convince officials they were too dangerous to let out from the detention camps.

The database indicates much of this information is collected by teams of cadres stationed at mosques, sent to visit homes and posted in communities.

"His father taught him how to pray," notes one entry for his eldest, Ablikim Memtimin.

"His family's religious atmosphere is thick. We recommend he (Emer) continue training," says another entry for his youngest son, Emer Memtimin.

Even a neighbor was tainted by living near him, with Emer's alleged crimes and prison sentence recorded in the neighbor's dossier.

The database indicates much of this information is collected by teams of cadres stationed at mosques, sent to visit homes and posted in communities. This information is then compiled in a dossier called the "three circles", encompassing their relatives, community, and religious background.

It wasn't just the religious who were detained. The database shows that Karakax officials also explicitly targeted people for activities that included going abroad, getting a passport or installing foreign software.

Pharmacist Tohti Himit was detained in a camp for having gone multiple times to one of 26 "key" countries, mostly Muslim, according to the database.

Former employee Habibullah, who is now in Turkey, recalled Himit as a secular, kind and wealthy man who kept his face free of a beard.

“He wasn’t very pious, he didn’t go to the mosque,” said Habibullah, who declined to give his first name out of fear of retribution against family still in China. “I was shocked by how absurd the reasons for detention were.”

The database says cadres found Himit had attended his grandfather’s funeral at a local mosque on March 10, 2008. Later that year, the cadres found, he had gone to the same mosque again, once to worship and once to celebrate a festival. In 2014 he had gone to Anhui province, in inner China, to get a passport and go abroad.

That, the government concluded, was enough to show that Himit was “certainly dangerous.” They ordered Himit to stay in the center and “continue training.”

Emer is now under house arrest due to health issues, his former student, Muhammad, has heard. It’s unclear where Emer’s sons are.

It was the imam’s courage and stubbornness that did him in, Muhammad said. Though deprived of his mosque and his right to teach, Emer quietly defied the authorities for two decades by staying true to his faith.

“Unlike some other scholars, he never cared about money or anything else the Communist Party could give him,” Muhammad said. “He never bowed down to them — and that’s why they wanted to eliminate him.”



SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

EDITORIALS, OP-EDS AND REACTIONS ON FORCED BIRTH CONTROL STORY:

[Genocide in Xinjiang Jan. 19, 2021](#)

[US sanctions Chinese officials over repression of minorities](#)

[Calls for UN probe of China forced birth control on Uighurs](#)

[Washington Post: What's happening in Xinjiang is genocide](#)

[The Atlantic: China's Xinjiang Policy: Less About Births, More About Control](#)

[Quartz: On Xinjiang, even those wary of Holocaust comparisons are reaching for the word "genocide"](#)

Action taken after the forced labor story:

[AP News July 21, 2020](#)

[Apple Insider Dec. 3, 2020](#)

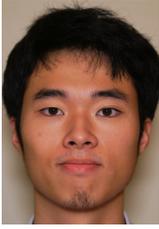
Earlier AP reporting on forced labor among Uighurs:

[Hair weaves from Chinese prison camps](#)

[Sportswear traced to factory in China's internment camps](#)

[US apparel firm cuts off Chinese factory in internment camp](#)

MEET THE WRITER



Dake Kang is a multiformat journalist in the Associated Press's Beijing bureau who has covered China for the past three years. Kang was instrumental in winning the AP the prestigious Osborn Elliott prize in 2019 primarily for coverage of human rights abuses against the Uighurs.