



*United Nations Human
Rights Council*
GWCI A XIV
November 7th, 2009

Chair: Kaylee Sager

Vice Chair: Kirsten Ortega
Vice Chair: Maria Villaquiran

Dear Delegates,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 24th annual George Washington University Conference on International Affairs and specifically to the United Nations Human Rights Council. My name is Kaylee Sager and I will be your Chair for this committee. This conference will be one of amazing memories and is sure to broaden your knowledge of many international issues in our world today.

I have participated in Model UN conference since I first was in eighth grade, around many of your ages'. I started off as a delegate and traveled to conferences in the Netherlands (The Hague International Model UN Conference—THIMUN), Haarlem, The Netherlands and in Beijing. Later, I served in leadership positions in these conferences as a chair. Eventually, I served in administrative roles including Under Secretary General of the two largest MUN Conferences in Asia, Beijing MUN (BEIMUN) and THIMUN-Singapore. Since coming to The George Washington University I have been Vice-Chair of the UNCHR in 2008 and Chair of the United Nations Committee on Refugees in Spring 2009.

I am a sophomore in the George Washington University's Elliot School of International Affairs double majoring in International Affairs and Asian Studies, with a minor in Chinese. Aside from being part of the GWCIA team, I enjoy being an activity member in Sigma Iota Rho honors society, a member of Alpha Delta Pi sorority, and an employee of GW's Residential Property Management and GW Law School Career Development center.

This year's committee topic is special as it focuses on one of the media's most publicized human rights issues of the past year. The Uighur repression, though it can seem a little daunting at first, has been simplistically outlined in this background guide. I encourage you to look at more than just the links below while researching. This topic is perceived as a repression by one side (the Uighurs and many in the international community) and a terrorist separatist uprising to others (the Chinese and other international bodies); it would be wise to preview both perspectives.

I have enjoyed researching and preparing for this conference, so if you have any questions or worries, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to meeting each of you, reading your positions papers and hearing your debate! Get excited for an amazing weekend!

Happy researching!
Kaylee Sager
Chair, UN Council on Human Rights
ksager@gwmail.gwu.edu



Introduction to Committee

Our Committee for GWCIA XIV is the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). It was established in the United Nations in 2006 as the successor to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR). The UN Human Rights Council's purpose is to address human rights violations around the world. The council has forty-seven seats. Members are elected into the council. Every member is reviewed periodically to ensure they are upholding the standards that the committee strives to uphold.

Background

At this year's GWCIA, our committee will be discussing the recent most publicized human rights abuse of the past summer: the Uighur repression in China. The Uighurs people are ethnic Turks who migrated into the northern China area before the 900s. Though they have lived in the Chinese region for a long time, the Chinese consider them a separate ethnic group.

HISTORY OF THE UIGHUR POPULATION

Timeline: Beginning of Uighur Involvement in China

The Uighurs started out as a tribe in the northern Chinese area, which was then called the Uighur Empire. After disputes, they moved into a region of northwestern China that is now within the Chinese province of Xinjiang. There, they created separate Uighur states. The Qing Dynasty Chinese Empire first attempted to colonize Xinjiang in the

1750s, but the Uighurs continued to fight against them for decades. The Uighurs continually have tried to attempt to create a sovereign (independent) state ever since. This desire has continued to this day.

Uighur Relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC)

After the Chinese revolution in 1949, the Uighurs refused to agree to form a formal confederate relationship with Mao TseDong's People's Republic of China. So, in 1955, Xinjiang was classified as an "autonomous region" of the People's Republic of China."¹ Mao renamed the region the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, which caused many of the Uighur to flee to Turkey and other nations.

After the renaming of the region (it was called East Turkestan Republic before 1949), many Han (ethnic Chinese) have moved into the region, causing a lot of tension with the nationalist Uighurs still living there.

Uighur and Han Chinese Cultural Differences

The Uighur ethnic group speaks Turkish and looks very different from the typical Han Chinese person. They look more like they are from Central Asia than from China. For instance, many have light hair and light eyes, instead of the typical black hair and dark brown eyes of the Han Chinese who speak Mandarin or Cantonese Chinese.

¹ Bhattacharji, P. (2009, July 6). *Uighurs and China's Xinjiang Region*. Retrieved August 23, 2009, from Council of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.cfr.org/publication/16870/>



The Uighur's are a predominantly Muslim population. Their traditional dress that many still wear, is either male skull cap and dish-dash long white dress and female head coverings and abaya (a black garment worn over a colorful dress). The Han Chinese in contrast, are a sacra-religious (they do not have one single identifiable religion) group of people.

The Uighurs live primarily in Xinjiang. After the Han Chinese colonized the area, many other ethnic groups moved in. Xinjiang is home to thirteen major ethnic groups² though the majority of people are now Han Chinese. The Uighurs, now a minority in their own region, continually express their dissatisfaction with the religious and cultural repressions they feel from the Han Chinese immigrants. They feel very threatened by the amount of Han Chinese people living in their area, because the Uighurs have less opportunities to start businesses and compete with the Han Chinese people. The Han Chinese, on the other hand, respond that they are not repressing the Uighurs. The Chinese government claims to have only helped to raise the economy, public health and education levels in Xinjiang by encouraging people to move into the region and start up businesses.³

Current Status of Topic

² Bhattacharji, P. (2009, July 6). *Uighurs and China's Xinjiang Region*. Retrieved August 23, 2009, from Council of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.cfr.org/publication/16870/>

³ Bhattacharji, P. (2009, July 6). *Uighurs and China's Xinjiang Region*. Retrieved August 23, 2009, from Council of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.cfr.org/publication/16870/>

Due to the Uighurs very nationalist history, the Chinese government consistently refers to them as "terrorists." The recent issue between the Han Chinese and Uighurs is a debate over whether or not the Chinese government was repressing the Uighurs' culture, economic opportunities and Muslim religion.

The Uighurs claim they are economically repressed. They claim the repression began when the Chinese government offered Han migrants financial incentives to come into the region and set up businesses. While the ethnic Chinese have now begun to dominate the population and the region's economy (China's Uighur population now makes up less than half of the twenty million people in Xinjiang province⁴), many of the Uighur people began to advocate for an independence movement. The Chinese claim their support and investments in Xinjiang were to promote economic development. However, the Uighurs continue to complain about a limited job market and competition for natural resources.

In July 2009, multiple violent clashes occurred between the Uighurs, Chinese state police and Han Chinese residents in the city of Ürümqi. The Uighur people claim that nearly 1,000 Uighurs disappeared overnight during the debacle. The Uighur incident started after a report that two Uighurs were killed in a Chinese toy factory. The

⁴ McCurry, J. (2009, July 29). *10,00 Uighurs disappeared during unrest in China*. Retrieved August 23, 2009, from The Guardian World News: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jul/29/uighur-leader-japan-tokyo-china>



deaths compounded with the Uighur people's issues with the fact that they are still in poverty unlike the successful Han Chinese immigrants, spurred their uprising in July.

The Chinese on the other hand, suggest that the root of the problem was political and that the Uighurs have always been a nationalistic group of people. The Chinese government suggested the uprisings in July were just another example of the Uighurs' rioting patterns. Since July, the Uighurs' have staged many mass riots and as a result have been detained and sentenced to trials. There are suspicions that the Chinese government has also tortured them in an effort to curb their "separatist tendencies."

International Involvement

The USA and other nations became involved in the conflict around 2004 when the Bush Administration detained seventeen Uighurs suspected of being part of an Islamist Terrorist organization⁵. Since then though, they have been searching for nations to resettle the detained Uighurs in and only just came up with a solution this past summer. The July conflict only served to quicken their efforts to relocate the Uighur detainees.

Otherwise, it is hard for the international community to become very involved in negotiations because the information shared between both sides is rather limited.

⁵ Daskal, J. (2008, October 6). *US: Parole Uighur Detainees Inot the United States*. Retrieved August 23, 2009, from Human Rights Watch:
<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2008/10/06/us-parole-uighur-detainees-united-states>

Bloc Positions

There are two main positions right now: those supporting the Uighurs and those supporting the Han Chinese.

The Uighurs feel repressed by the Han Chinese migration that threatens their status as the dominate ethnic group in the Xinjiang region.

The groups supporting the Uighurs focus on the human rights violations that have occurred as a result of the oppression the ethnic group feels. The inability to have a stay in their region, the inability to get a secure job, and the violence inflicted upon them are issues that this side continues to press. The USA and many Uighur human rights groups like the Uighur World Congress and Uighur American Association are in this bloc.

The Han Chinese on the other hand, views the Uighurs as a separatist group that is constantly causing unnecessary separatist riots. As a result, the Han Chinese uses a strict reproach when dealing with the Uighur ethnic group.

Those sympathizing with the Chinese "side" believe that the Uighurs' nationalistic fervor is almost like that of a terrorist organization. This block believes the Uighurs are thus threatening to the control of the Chinese Community Party government and the peace of the Chinese state.

Potential Solutions

One of the most necessary solutions would be to encourage discussion between the Uighur groups and the Chinese government. That way both sides can voice their desires, concerns



and solutions in a respectable manner that does not involve violence.

Sadly as of right now, the solution many of the Uighurs individually feel is best, is to flee the country. Many of them flee to the former Soviet Union in order to avoid the violence in Xinjiang, especially Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and other Central Asian states.

Further, having the Chinese consider independence or greater autonomy for the Uighurs might also be a solution to their continual state of revolt.

Finally, China needs to reconsider its policies when dealing with the Uighur population. Their hard-line approach that causes so much discontent with the Uighurs, may need to be re-evaluated in order to keep peace in the Chinese state.

Organizations (NGOs) can provide it?

- What must be done to prevent future aggressive confrontations between the Han Chinese and Uighur people in Xinjiang?
- What services should the Chinese government offer to the Uighur people to help diminish their “separatist” tendencies? How can they reconcile their differences?
- How can better relationships between the Han and Uighur people in Xinjiang be supported?
- How can we educate the international community on the Uighur incidences and their history in order to prevent other similar conflicts from occurring worldwide?

Questions to Consider

- What are religious repression, cultural repression, and economic repression? Which form of repression does the Uighur incidences and history represent?
- What is the difference between a “terrorist” and a “freedom fighter;” in relation to the Uighurs and the Chinese government. To what extent can the Uighurs be considered terrorists?
- How will the Chinese government determine what a terrorist is from now on?
- What kind of support should the international community offer the Uighurs? Which agencies or Non-Governmental

Helpful Websites

http://www.rferl.org/content/Chinas_Uyghurs_A_Minority_In_Their_Own_Land/1772366.html

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jul/29/uyghur-leader-japan-tokyo-china>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/30/world/asia/30Uighur.html>

<http://china.hrw.org/>

<http://www.hrichina.org/public/index>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/30/world/asia/30Uighur.html>

<http://www.cfr.org/publication/16870/>

<http://chinadigitaltimes.net/china/uyghurs/>

<http://www.uyghurnews.com/ReadNews.asp?UighurNews=un-urges-china-ethnic-groups-to-halt-violence&ItemID=EY-8120093631102703202996>



<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8135203.stm>

<http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=23388>

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/discussion/2009/07/07/DI2009070701491.html>

