

STATEMENT: UN Minority Forum
Speaker: Zumretay Arkin
Time: 2 min
Date: Friday, December 1

Item 3: Legal and Structural Approaches to More Inclusive Societies

Thank you Mr. or Ms. Chair.

We appreciate being given the opportunity to speak at the Forum.

Today, I'd like to bring the attention of the forum to the Uyghur and Turkic population in the Uyghur Autonomous Region of China.

The counter terrorism legislation and policies implemented in the region since 2014 have disproportionately discriminated against Uyghurs and Turkic Muslims.

The Chinese government is engaging in a systematic campaign to eradicate Uyghur culture, religion, and language through policy and practice, including the destruction of sacred cultural and religious sites such as mosques, cemeteries, and shrines, as well as marginalizing intangible cultural heritage.

Under the guise of the "bilingual education" policies, the government has banned the use of the Uyghur language in schools and detained and sentenced scholars wishing to establish Uyghur-language schools within the region.

Other systematic abuses include mass arbitrary detention of Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples in order to "cleanse" detainees of "extremist" thoughts through "re-education." Chinese government policy now includes the widespread exploitation of the labour of Uyghurs detained in internment camps and through forced labour programs.

Freedom of movement is severely restricted and Uyghurs live in a highly securitized environment with ubiquitous surveillance and monitoring. Biometric data of all Uyghurs have been collected, including DNA and blood samples, fingerprints, and iris scans, without consent. Transnational repression targeting Uyghurs abroad has emerged as a means of extending control over Uyghurs living in the diaspora through harassment and intimidation.

China's policy of forced sterilizations, coerced IUD implants, and suppression of birth rates meets the definition of genocide under the UN Convention. Coerced Uyghur-Han marriages and family separation policies have impacted the normal family life of Uyghurs and Turkic Muslims in the region.

These repressive policies and legal frameworks have effectively eliminated the possibility for Uyghurs and Turkic peoples to be part of an inclusive society and have equal access to socio-economic, cultural and political opportunities.

In a context where the State doesn't respond to UN bodies recommendations, how can civil society organisations push for accountability through the UN?