

Thank you Madame Chair,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and privilege to be among the panelists of **Session 1**. Persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities are often victims of multiple discrimination.

This is specifically alarming, when gross human rights violations are committed by permanent members of the UN Security Council. I am going to speak about discrimination and other abuses the Uyghur and other minorities face in the Uyghur region of China.

### **Employment discrimination**

The primary driver of Uyghur unemployment is ethnic discrimination. In both public and private companies, Uyghurs face severe competition from Han locals/migrants. In all industries, Han workers receive higher wages.

Only 17 percent of Uyghur university graduates secure a full-time job after graduation. Even Uyghurs with perfect Mandarin face severe discrimination in the job market. Many job advertisements discriminate more specifically against Uyghur women.

Former detainees of “re-education camps” and former convicts find that they cannot find employment after serving prison sentences.

Rural Uyghurs face different kinds of labour violations that prevents them from seeking non-agricultural jobs.

### **Discrimination against Women**

Uyghur women are subject to a program to “cleanse” them of their “extremist” thoughts through “re-education” and forced labour facilities. China’s ban on Uyghur women wearing religious symbols is a gender-based violation of Uyghur women’s rights.

Since 2015, the government of China has been reducing the birthrate of Uyghur women through coercive family planning. There is a state-run campaign of mass female sterilization.

The Chinese delegation did not respond to the allegations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and simply denied the existence of coercive birth policies without refuting the specific claims based on statistical data.

### **Religious Discrimination and Destruction of cultural heritage**

The CCP has declared war on religion (targeting not only Muslims but also Christians and Buddhists). Millions of Uyghurs and other minorities in “re-education” camps detained on ridiculous charges, such as “abnormally long beards” or “wearing veils”. Detainees are not allowed to pray, forced to eat pork and drink alcohol. The Chinese authorities created a list of banned “overly religious” names, mostly of Arabic origin.

China has destroyed thousands of mosques, historical buildings and graveyards in the attempt to vanish all non-Chinese cultural heritage. This campaign has been intensified since 2017 after establishment of internment camps with the ultimate goal of eradicating the Muslim and Uyghur identity.

### **Forced marriages**

In 1979 China launched its “one-family-one-child” policy, which forced couples to have only one child. Due to the cultural preference for males, the Chinese families often chose to abort their daughters. That led to huge disproportion in numbers with prevailing of Han men over women. The government encourages Han men to marry Uyghur and other minority women. This appears to be a tactic intended to assimilate Uyghurs into Han society. Children of arbitrarily detained Uyghurs are being sent to state-run orphanages, where they are forced to embrace the Chinese culture, language and lifestyle.

### **Sexual abuses**

As witnessed by numerous ex-detainees they have been sexually abused during interrogations by Chinese authorities, while also witnessing other fellow detainees being raped.

There is so-called ‘Family friends’ practice - when Han men spend weeks in Uyghur households ending up with sexual harassment, non-consensual sex, interference with many cultural and religious customs.

A former female detainee, who fled Xinjiang to the U.S., stated that she was tortured and gang-raped three times in the camp. An Uzbek teacher from Xinjiang in the camp, recalled one Uyghur woman saying that “The rape has become a culture. They are subject to horrific torture.” Another teacher said that guards “picked the girls and young women they wanted and took them away.”

There are dozens of other stories told by the victims saying the exactly same thing.

### **Enforced disappearances**

The Chinese authorities appear to have increasingly adopted disappearances as a form of governance. The government amended the Criminal Procedure Law to allow for police to hold suspects in non-detention facilities for up to six months, depriving those investigated for national security crimes of access to lawyers or family members.

In XUAR there likely remain hundreds of thousands of Uyghurs who are subjected to arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance through the legal system. In 2022, Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) urged China to immediately release all individuals arbitrarily detained.

### **Language discrimination**

In contradiction to Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in XUAR Mandarin has displaced Uyghur in various areas. The authorities argue they introduce a “bilingual system”, but in practice a monolingual system is being imposed.

According to credible reports, schools must ban the use of Uyghur language in “collective activities, public activities and management work of the education system” and “correct the flawed method of providing Uyghur language training to Chinese language teachers”.

In this context, I would recommend the following:

### **Urge China:**

- 1) Release all those arbitrarily detained in the “re-education” camps and clarify the whereabouts, condition and fate of missing family members and arrange safe contacts and reunions.
- 2) Ratify the ILO standards for compulsory labour, and to honour its commitments to the ILO’s Convention,
- 3) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and (CERD).
- 4) Investigate all the cases of sexual assault allegations in “re-education” camps and bring the perpetrators to justice.
- 5) End the practice of enforced disappearance, which gravely impacts some of the core rights articulated in the UDHR
- 6) Investigate all reported disappearances in accordance to its international obligations
- 7) Amend the revised Criminal Procedure Law in line with international legal standards to prevent enforced disappearances.

### **To UN organisations:**

- 8) **UN HRC** take necessary steps to establish a Commission of Inquiry to independently examine the treatment of Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples in XUAR.
- 9) **UNESCO** investigate cases of destruction or marginalisation of natural and cultural heritage.
- 10) **Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief** investigate alleged violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief.

I thank you, Madame Chair!