

GA Blue Topic A Update Paper



Over the past 5 years, the Chinese government has sought to assimilate and reduce the cultural identity of the Muslim Uyghurs in Xinjiang, a region in Western China. Nearly 400 internment camps have been built to house Uyghurs.¹ While some camps are strictly to ‘re-educate’ Uyghurs, many are located strategically near factories and agricultural fields so that the Uyghurs can be used as slave labor. No matter their

actual usage, the Chinese government often refers to camps as “Vocational Education and Training Centers”. It is believed that hundreds of thousands of Uyghurs and other Muslim religious minorities are being used as slave laborers, with nearly 80,000 of those having been moved into other Chinese regions.² In 2018, 800,000 Uyghurs harvested cotton in Western China, which produces a quarter of the world’s cotton. The use of slave labor in factories and the agriculture industry mean that products built by global brands—such as Nike, BMW, Apple, and FILA—in China are built using slave labor. In all, forced labor activities is believed to earn China \$150 billion each year.³

In many camps, children are separated from their parents and parents are seldom given time to go spend with their children, instead being forced to work long hours and spend their free time attending mandatory re-education.⁴ Conditions in these slave labor camps are horrible, with women describing rampant sexual assault, poor food quality, and forced abortions.⁵

But the use of slave labor in China’s western regions has begun to provoke a backlash across the West. For example, in December 2020, the United States placed bans on goods and agricultural products manufactured from sites where forced labor has been documented.⁶ In all, the Department of Labor currently identifies 17 goods produced by forced labor in China and sentiment is growing that further product bans will be passed this year.⁷ While few countries have yet taken as decisive of an action as the United States, condemnations of China’s treatment of the Uyghurs are growing louder.⁸

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/24/china-has-built-380-internment-camps-in-xinjiang-study-finds>

² <https://www.dw.com/en/uighur-exploitation-in-china-slammed-as-modern-day-slavery/a-55953464> & <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/uyghurs-sale>

³ <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/u-s-takes-aggressive-steps-against-china-for-forcing-uyghurs-into-labor>

⁴ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/09/15/china-xinjiang-children-separated-families>

⁵ <https://www.voanews.com/south-central-asia/china-uses-rape-torture-tactic-against-uighur-detainees-victims-say>

⁶ <https://apnews.com/article/forced-labor-global-trade-china-archive-race-and-ethnicity-0a2b64d4b2dfce8dc6be8d402a96ecbe>

⁷ <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/against-their-will-the-situation-in-xinjiang>

⁸ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/7/germany-leads-charge-against-china-on-rights-abuses>