

# China's Ethnic Hui Community at Risk of Erasure

*A joint submission to*  
**The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**  
*for its*  
**3<sup>rd</sup> Periodic Review of the Implementation by**  
**the People's Republic of China**  
*of the*  
**International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

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## Executive Summary

1. China's Hui population in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region—numbering over a million—has been among the groups targeted by crimes against humanity in the government's counter-terrorism campaign in the region. Beginning in 2014 and escalating in 2017, this is the same counter-terrorism campaign that has received widespread international coverage for targeting Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and other Turkic-speaking groups. The campaign has resulted in the detentions of a plausible estimate of more than 100,000 Hui in re-education centers, in addition to pre-trial detentions and imprisonments. The Hui have also been subject to restrictions aimed at eliminating “signs of extremism” that include what the OHCHR has referred to as religious and cultural expression protected under the Covenant, and intrusive surveillance of public and private life.
2. The Hui are an ethno-religious group of primarily Chinese-speaking adherents of Islam who are descendants of Han Chinese and immigrants from Central Asia and the Middle East via the Silk Road trade. A few ethnically distinct Muslim groups in China are also classified as Hui by the Chinese government. There are 11.4 million Hui in China according to the most recent national census, making them the third most populous of the officially recognized ethnic groups in China.<sup>1</sup> Hui communities are concentrated in various regions in China, with the largest number in the northwestern provinces.
3. This submission also covers violations of Hui cultural and religious rights throughout China. Through the government's “Sinification” campaign, authorities have tried to forcibly integrate religious groups into the government and Party system and to eliminate aspects of cultural expression that are seen by authorities as being incompatible with Han Chinese culture. Authorities have intimidated and detained lawyers taking up cases of Hui persecuted for exercising their cultural rights and censored online content about Hui and Islam, while permitting officials to foment hate speech and campaigns attacking Hui communities on Chinese social media.
4. “Poverty alleviation” is another Chinese government policy with a significant impact on Hui social, cultural, and economic rights. Officials have implemented two major poverty alleviation programs among Hui communities that require relocation: “ecological migration” and domestic “labor transfers” to more economically developed regions within China. In designing these programs, authorities have failed to conduct consultations with the communities that would be seriously affected. Officials have stated that the goals of these policies include assimilation of minority groups. These policies have forced the integration of ethnic minority communities into Han Chinese-dominant cities, where Hui find their employment opportunities limited to unstable and low-paying wage work.
5. Finally, this report covers violations of Hui economic rights in the context of forced labor in Xinjiang and the threatened deprivation of social benefits in both the Xinjiang counter-terrorism campaign and the nationwide “Sinification” campaign. Hui throughout China have also faced discrimination in the job market and the workplace, and this

discrimination has worsened because of the stigmatizing effect of the government campaigns marginalizing and criminalizing Hui religious and cultural practices.

## **Chapter 1. Counter-Terrorism Policies Targeting Hui in Xinjiang**

### ***1.1 Targeting Hui for Exhibiting “Signs of Extremism” (Articles 2 & 15; List of Issues pars. 12, 29)***

6. Beginning in 2014 and escalating in 2017, the Chinese government’s “strike hard” campaign to counter “terrorism” and “extremism” in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Xinjiang or XUAR) has resulted in egregious violations of the social, economic, and cultural rights of the over one million Hui persons in region.<sup>2</sup> Though the resulting crimes against humanity directed at Uyghurs and Kazakhs have drawn more widespread attention, China’s Hui population has also been among the targeted groups.
7. As part of the “strike hard” campaign, authorities have implemented a series of laws<sup>3</sup> and policies that have been used to impose severe sanctions on a wide range of activities that government officials have designated “signs of extremism.”<sup>4</sup> Authorities have rounded up members of the Hui community and held them in detention centers and re-education camps and sentenced some of them to prison for engaging in Hui religious and cultural activities such as praying at home<sup>5</sup> or in mosques,<sup>6</sup> watching<sup>7</sup> or discussing<sup>8</sup> religious content online, traveling to Muslim-majority countries,<sup>9</sup> having funded mosque construction,<sup>10</sup> going on Hajj pilgrimages,<sup>11</sup> being an imam, both with<sup>12</sup> and without<sup>13</sup> state licenses, and keeping religious paraphernalia in the home.<sup>14</sup> Such government measures targeting Hui persons for the above-listed activities violate their rights under the ICESCR to non-discrimination (article 2.2) and to take part in cultural life (15.1.a).
8. In further violation of the Hui community’s cultural rights under article 15.1.a, authorities have prohibited Hui communities in Xinjiang from engaging in religious and cultural activities such as observing Ramadan and Eid-al-Adha and have required Hui individuals to renounce their religion under duress.<sup>15</sup> Authorities have required Hui families of those who had been detained in re-education camps to attend weekly flag-raising ceremonies<sup>16</sup> and evening classes with “anti-religious” curriculum and demanded that attendees report on the religious observance of friends and family, threatening to send those who failed to report to a re-education camp.<sup>17</sup>

### ***1.2 Detention of Hui & Mistreatment in Detention (Articles 11 & 12)***

9. As part of the counter-terrorism campaign beginning in 2014, Hui in Xinjiang have been detained in pre-trial detention centers and re-education camps and sentenced to prison. The Chinese government has made little information public about the number or ethnicity of those detained in the campaign. In the absence of official data, researcher Gene Bunin has found that many witness testimonies from former detainees who later fled to Kazakhstan mention that Hui were detained alongside them in Xinjiang; Bunin also found that a report of 43 persons detained in Xinjiang in one predominantly Hui village of 60 households was comparable to expert estimates of the proportion detained in

Uyghur communities in Xinjiang.<sup>18</sup> Using researchers' conservative estimate of 10 percent for the proportion of those detained in Uyghur communities,<sup>19</sup> it is plausible to estimate that perhaps more than 100,000 Hui may have been deprived of liberty in connection with the campaign in Xinjiang.

10. The conditions in which Hui persons have been held in custody have resulted in serious violations of their rights to an adequate standard of living (article 11) and to physical and mental health (article 12). Uyghur, Kazakh, and other majority Muslim groups have reported significant physical and psychological abuse in custody,<sup>20</sup> and reports indicate that Hui in custody have been subject to similar treatment,<sup>21</sup> such as being crowded in squalid conditions of around 40 detainees to a cell with space so limited they could only sleep in shifts, being deprived of sunlight, and malnutrition so severe that detainees suffered from life-threatening anemia and weight loss.<sup>22</sup> Like other detainees, Hui have been handcuffed and shackled for long periods,<sup>23</sup> with at least one account having emerged of a Hui man dying in detention after being restrained in a tiger chair for 78 hours.<sup>24</sup>

### ***1.3 Surveillance in Public and Private Life (Articles 2, 10, 12, & 13)***

11. The detentions described above underpin a broader system of surveillance and restrictions aimed at eliminating the aforementioned “signs” of religious “extremism” in public and private life in the XUAR. The implementation of such policies has violated the rights of Hui individuals to non-discrimination (Article 2.2) These measures include close scrutiny of the movements and activities of Hui and other non-Han persons residing in the XUAR through security checkpoints,<sup>25</sup> forced inspection of social media history,<sup>26</sup> random cellphone checks,<sup>27</sup> home inspections,<sup>28</sup> regular questioning by police in person and over social media,<sup>29</sup> and assigning public employees to stay in homes to monitor for religious observance and other “signs of extremism.”<sup>30</sup>
12. To facilitate monitoring by local authorities, Hui persons have also been subjected to discriminatory travel, residence, and employment restrictions, with reports of local authorities selectively requiring Hui to return to their registered hometowns.<sup>31</sup> Authorities have also prohibited Hui from relocating within Xinjiang by reportedly refusing to register them as new residents.<sup>32</sup>
13. Authorities have also subjected Hui persons to physically and psychologically intrusive surveillance of their private lives. As part of the “becoming family” homestay program, public employees have reportedly monitored people in their homes for long periods of time with highly intrusive methods—continuously taking pictures of their activities, asking children about their parents’ activities,<sup>33</sup> and even sleeping with families in their beds.<sup>34</sup> The program constitutes a serious, coercive disruption of family life (Article 10.1) and also violates the right to enjoyment of mental health (Article 12.1) and to ensure the religious and moral education of one’s children (Article 13.3).

## ***1.4. Recommendations***

14. We urge the Committee to recommend that the State party:

- Indicate any concrete steps taken to adopt comprehensive legislation or to review the existing laws, including “counter-terrorism” legislation, for eliminating discrimination and violations of social, cultural, and economic rights against ethnic groups including the Hui.
- Provide information on the measures taken, and their effectiveness, to combat widespread social stigma and discrimination against ethnic and religious minority groups, including the Hui, in the country’s counter-terror campaigns.
- Provide statistical data on children of ethnic or religious minorities including the children of Hui persons, who have been separated from their families, without adequate care, when parents are taken to “vocational training” camps.
- Indicate the measures taken to improve access to health-care services, particularly among persons living in rural ethnic minority regions, including the Hui regions, and detainees and prisoners.
- Provide information on the measures taken to ensure the freedom of Hui parents to determine the religious and moral education of their children.

## **Chapter 2. Discriminatory Policies and Practices Violating Hui Cultural and Religious Rights**

### ***2.1 “Sinification” Policy Undermines Hui Religious Freedom and Identity (Articles 2 & 15; List of Issues par. 30)***

15. In CESCR’s List of Issues, paragraph 30, the Committee asks the state to “indicate the measures taken to ensure that the cultural, religious and linguistic identity of ethnic minority groups is not undermined by the assimilation policy of the State party, known as “Sinification.”
16. Much of the Sinification campaign has targeted the Hui people, which appears to be authorized and coordinated via secretive directives<sup>35</sup> from the PRC State Council and the United Front Work Department. Implementation of the campaign has had the effect of expunging communities of their connections to Hui culture, religion, and each other so thoroughly that some leaders view the erasure of a meaningful Hui identity within another generation as being a likely possibility.<sup>36</sup>
17. A classified 2018 State Council directive called for eliminating signs of Arab cultural influence in Islamic venues, dress, and religious observance, prohibiting *waqf* charitable funds from being independently held and administered by local Islamic communities, and barring Islamic organizations from running programs involving minors—from kindergartens to Arabic language schools and study abroad programs.<sup>37</sup>

18. Among the forms of “Arab influence” being targeted for removal since 2016 are Arabic lettering and motifs on buildings, in public areas, and in people’s homes.<sup>38</sup> Islamic dietary restrictions have also been targeted as an unacceptable expression of Hui identity: since 2016 across China, restaurants and groceries have been forced to remove halal signage,<sup>39</sup> and by 2019 authorities in Ningxia, Beijing, and elsewhere were no longer allowing food, dairy, and wheat producers and restaurants to certify food as halal.<sup>40</sup>
19. The Sinification campaign also aims to prevent transmission of cultural and religious heritage across generations. Minors under 18 have been prohibited from entering mosques and other religious venues in many areas, and Arabic language and Islamic schools have been shut down by authorities. In Gansu, extremely limited quotas for Arab language and religious instruction have made it impossible for most children to access instruction.<sup>41</sup>
20. In 2018, the Chinese Islamic Association—the state-sanctioned leadership organization for Islamic religious leaders—released measures regarding the Sinification of mosques and Islamic doctrine.<sup>42</sup> The policy was referred to as the “four entries,” and directed local officials to ensure that “four” things make their “entry” into Hui, Uyghur, and all other mosques: the national flag, the Chinese constitution and laws, core socialist values, and Chinese traditional culture.<sup>43</sup> Mosques were reportedly required to raise national flags,<sup>44</sup> which were often accompanied by slogans exhorting patriotism, ethnic unity, and social stability.<sup>45</sup>
21. The “four entries” also heralded the intrusion of official surveillance into the religious and private life of Hui. Surveillance cameras have been installed by local police to monitor activity inside mosques in Ningxia and Henan.<sup>46</sup> Hui have also been expected by the government to report on the religious activities of friends and families, with monetary rewards offered to informants.<sup>47</sup>
22. Authorities have sought to introduce the last two “entries”—core socialist values and Chinese traditional culture—through Hui religious leaders. Imams are only able to openly preach contingent on whether they demonstrate loyalty to the government’s Sinification program.<sup>48</sup> Mosques without licensed imams have been shut down entirely.<sup>49</sup> Officials in Ningxia and Henan now require imams to attend monthly training sessions regarding Party ideology and official policies governing ethnic minorities; for renewal of their imam license they must pass yearly tests regarding Party ideology.<sup>50</sup> Imams are closely policed to monitor their deviation from officially prescribed interpretations of Islam.<sup>51</sup>
23. Meanwhile, the Sinification policy seeks to change the very beliefs of Islam by inserting “core socialist values” into the religious doctrine itself. The state-led China Islamic Association began leading conferences in December 2020 for the purpose of generating official re-interpretations of Islamic theology from the perspective of Confucianism and “core socialist values” so that they can be in line with “Chinese traditional culture.”<sup>52</sup> Officials have worked methodically to remove signs of Arabic influence from mosques: the call to prayer in Arabic was prohibited in at least Ningxia and Gansu and replaced

with the sound of a siren; as with all other buildings, Arabic inscriptions and motifs were removed from mosque walls.<sup>53</sup>

24. The Sinification measure that has provoked the strongest reaction in Hui communities is the forced demolition of mosque domes and minarets and their replacement with traditional Chinese roof designs.<sup>54</sup> Authorities have retaliated against those opposing the demolitions. Following mass protests in Tongxin, Ningxia over the attempted removal of a mosque dome in August 2018, authorities visited each Hui household in the community requiring each to give consent to the replacement of the dome, issuing threats such as job loss for family members who were public employees.<sup>55</sup>

## ***2.2 Intimidation and Detention of Lawyers Taking up Cases of Hui Cultural Rights (Article 2, List of Issues par. 4)***

25. In its List of Issues (paragraph 4), the Committee asks the government to provide information about the intimidation of lawyers taking up cases of violations of economic, social and cultural rights. Chinese authorities have harassed, threatened, and detained lawyers for representing Hui clients charged in connection with their religious identity or activities. Instead, authorities forced Hui detainees to be represented by government-appointed attorneys.
26. One Hui interviewee told CHRD in 2022 that in 2017, a lawyer was disappeared by authorities in Xinjiang for several days after being engaged to represent Hui religious leader Jin Dehuai, who was convicted for separatism based on religious activities such as preaching in his home, encouraging proselytizing, and organizing religious conferences with participants from abroad.<sup>56</sup> The lawyer canceled representation after being released by authorities.
27. The same interviewee informed CHRD that authorities in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region in 2019 warned lawyers against attempting to represent Hui defendants who had been detained for their refusal to consent to the government's removal of a mosque minaret. The defendants were members of the leadership committee of the Weizhou Grand Mosque in Ningxia's Tongxin county,<sup>57</sup> Consequently, the defendants were assigned government-appointed lawyers and later convicted for "criminal syndicate activity."<sup>58</sup> Charges involving "criminal syndicates" have allowed for expedited prosecution and lower levels of judicial scrutiny under a major national anti-corruption campaign initiated in 2018 known as "Sweep Away the Dark Forces and Eliminate the Evil" (*saohei chu'e*).<sup>59</sup>

## ***2.3 Internet Censorship (Article 15; List of Issues par. 31)***

28. Chinese internet regulations have led to the selective censorship of content from Hui internet users while allowing denigrating and hateful speech about Hui and Islam to proliferate on social media. This combined with the encouragement of hate speech by public figures in official positions has contributed to worsening discrimination against Hui persons in Chinese society more generally.

29. In March 2022, a state ban on independent publication of “religious information” online went into effect, allowing only officially registered organizations vetted by the government to publish information online about “religious doctrine, knowledge, culture, or activities.”<sup>60</sup> Prior to this ban, websites and online platforms popular among users in the Hui community had already been shut down.
30. For example, the website Zhongmu ([www.2muslim.com](http://www.2muslim.com)) was shut down when a user-posted an open letter to Xi Jinping calling for the release of political prisoners was reposted by Chinese Academy of Social Sciences scholar Xi Wuyi on Chinese social media platform Sina Weibo as evidence of Hui subversion.<sup>61</sup> The website had been online for over 13 years and included forums for 77 local communities throughout China, and former users searching for “Zhongmu” on Chinese social media found that searches on these platforms produced no results, thus preventing them from reconnecting.<sup>62</sup> In addition to Zhongmu, the personal websites of leading Hui cultural figures such as imam Li Yunfei and writer Zhang Chengzhi were shut down in 2020 and 2021, respectively.<sup>63</sup>
31. Individual Hui Internet users have also encountered censorship online. Researchers reported in a 2018 study that Hui users frequently found that their online posts about Islam or official ethnic policies were deleted or their accounts blocked, while state-approved imams have been allowed to discuss Islam online.<sup>64</sup> Such targeted censorship has effectively prevented Hui persons from freely exchanging ideas and information on the internet.
32. While websites and Hui Internet users have been censored, discriminatory and hateful speech about Islam and Muslims has flourished on Chinese-language social media platforms. Academic experts have observed that such anti-Muslim rhetoric online has been indirectly encouraged by state media, which almost always portrays Muslims as the grateful beneficiaries of state programs or as violent extremists.<sup>65</sup> Studies also find that social media platforms selectively fail to remove Islamophobic content clearly in violation of platform policies,<sup>66</sup> which experts note is itself a reflection of suspicion of Muslim groups among Chinese authorities<sup>67</sup> because authorities have significant control over what content appears online.<sup>68</sup> Islamophobic hate speech also comes in the form of vicious online attacks against social media users identified as Hui, which has caused many Hui internet users to avoid engaging on issues related to Islam online.<sup>69</sup>
33. Government officials are often both the source and propagators of some of the most vitriolic comments about Muslims and Islam on Chinese social media. Scholar of Marxism at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Xi Wuyi (mentioned above) has led numerous online campaigns against accommodations for or acknowledgment of Muslim members of Chinese society.<sup>70</sup> Another government figure who has mobilized online followers to target the Hui community is a government propaganda and cyberspace official named Cui Zijian, who said it was part of his “professional and patriotic duty” to lead a 2017 online campaign to shut down the construction of a mosque in Hefei, provincial capital of Anhui.<sup>71</sup> The status of such officials as in government capacity further legitimates hate speech about Muslims in mainstream discourse.

## **2.4 Recommendations**

34. The Committee should recommend that the State Party:

- Provide information on the efforts undertaken to promote and protect the culture, religion and language of ethnic minority groups, including the Hui, and show how the measures taken to ensure that the cultural, religious and linguistic identity of ethnic minority groups including the Hui are not undermined by the assimilation policy of the State party, known as “Sinicization.” Please also comment on reports that the State party has attempted to eradicate the culture, religion, and language of Hui through the destruction of sacred cultural and religious sites and bans on engaging in religious activity.
- Provide information about avenues for accountability, redress, and compensation for lawyers and law firms subject to intimidation, detention, and retaliation for taking up cases of violations of economic, social and cultural rights. Also provide information on the measures taken to provide an enabling environment for lawyers and human rights defenders to advocate and promote economic, social and cultural rights, particularly for Hui persons.
- Provide information on any measures taken to ensure the free exchange of ideas and information online without interference to the enjoyment of Hui persons to cultural rights and religious freedom.

## **Chapter 3. “Poverty Alleviation” Policies Disperse Hui Communities and Facilitate Cultural Assimilation**

### ***3.1 Political Goals and Effects of “Poverty Alleviation” Programs (Articles 2, 11 & 15; List of Issues par. 24)***

35. In its List of Issues (paragraph 24), the Committee asks the Chinese government to “specify the efforts made ... to involve the affected individuals and communities in designing and implementing various poverty alleviation projects, especially those entailing relocation and resettlement of residents[.]” CHRD finds that few, if any, such efforts have been made with Hui communities.
36. Chinese officials have implemented two major poverty alleviation policies among Hui communities that require relocation: “ecological migration” and domestic “labor transfers” to more economically developed regions within China. “Ecological migration” has been touted by President and Party Chairman Xi Jinping as part of a series of the government’s ethnic minority policies that would create “mutually embedded social structures,” “intermingle ethnic groups,” and “guide people of different ethnic groups to correctly understand ethnic relations and issues.”<sup>72</sup> Meanwhile, officials involved in a 2020 “labor transfer” recruitment effort targeting Hui workers cited the importance of “ensuring social stability and harmony” and “strengthening national unity.”<sup>73</sup>

37. In practice, such policies force the integration of ethnic minority communities into Han Chinese-dominant society, where they find employment opportunities limited to unstable and low-paying wage work. In designing these programs, authorities have failed to conduct consultations with the Hui communities that would be seriously affected by their implementation. The Chinese government's implementation of "ecological migration" and "labor transfer" policies has violated the rights of Hui persons to an adequate standard of living (article 11) and/or to participate in cultural life (article 15). The design and execution of these programs have also negatively impacted the rights of the Hui persons to non-discrimination (article 2) by targeting Hui for dispersal to achieve political goals.

### 3.2 "Ecological migration" (Articles 2, 11 & 15; List of Issues par. 24)

38. The Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region (Ningxia) hosts the world's largest planned "ecological migration" project in terms of people affected. Begun in 1983, the government has relocated more than 1.1 million residents, out of a total of 7.2 million people in the region to achieve "environmental" and "poverty alleviation" goals.<sup>74</sup> Scholars have contended that the policies are also a cover for dispersing and dislocating ethnic minority groups.<sup>75</sup> Ecological migration projects have been used to disperse hundreds of thousands of ethnic minorities in other areas: 710,000 people—72 percent ethnic minority—were resettled across 506 resettlement areas in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region between 2016 and 2020. The design of the resettlement plan emphasized relocating people from Zhuang, Miao, Yao, Maonan, and other ethnic minority groups and resettling them in mixed communities to promote "ethnic unity."<sup>76</sup> In Ningxia, although Hui make up 35% of the population, the majority of those resettled have been Hui.<sup>77</sup>

39. In one example, journalists found that Hui were forced to abandon independent farming for poorly remunerated jobs on industrial farms when 7,000 of them were relocated from Yejahe Village in the Xihaigu region to the newly established Miaomiao Lake Village.<sup>78</sup> Authorities denied farm subsidies and water pipelines to households that chose to remain.<sup>79</sup> The relocated villagers were not compensated for the land they relinquished in their original village, and they were required to pay a "resettlement fee" of 14,000 RMB (USD \$2,100) per household.<sup>80</sup> Local officials told Chinese media that in exchange each household received 300 square meters for housing,<sup>81</sup> but journalists found that relocated families of as many as eleven people were living in 50-square-meter, 2-bedroom apartments.<sup>82</sup>

40. Despite government promises that some families would be able to support themselves by farming allotted land in the new village, officials forced families to lease their plots to an agricultural company at low rates that the company allegedly stopped paying after the first year.<sup>83</sup> A quarter of the 350,000 people<sup>84</sup> relocated between 2011 and 2015 were not allotted any land for farming.<sup>85</sup> Officials justified this by insisting that proximity to highways and urban areas amounted to an improvement in quality of life and encouraging residents to work in nearby cities.<sup>86</sup> Officials boasted a high employment rate at 93 percent, but these figures were contested by local residents who reported that men were

unable to find construction work and families relied on government loans to meet expenses.<sup>87</sup> By 2021, Chinese media reported that garment work had been brought onsite to the village in a trailer.<sup>88</sup>

### **3.3 Domestic “labor transfers” (Articles 2 & 15; List of Issues par. 24)**

41. The other major “poverty alleviation” policy resulting in relocation and dispersal for Hui communities is the practice of domestic “labor transfers” coordinated by authorities in Ningxia,<sup>89</sup> Gansu,<sup>90</sup> Qinghai,<sup>91</sup> and Yunnan,<sup>92</sup> where majority-Hui communities are concentrated. Government officials run these programs in conjunction with companies and other cities or regions seeking workers.
42. These “labor transfer” programs have displaced hundreds of thousands of people at any given time. In 2020, the Ningxia government had coordinated the “labor transfer” of 817,600 residents to work in the coastal province of Fujian and other parts of China as of August.<sup>93</sup> In Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu province, 550,000 out of 2 million total residents of the province was working as transferred labor outside of Gansu, according to numbers reported in 2020.<sup>94</sup> Some of these local governments have been engaged in labor transfers of their residents for decades—Ningxia and Qinghai began enlisting residents to work for companies in coastal areas such as Fujian, Guangdong, and Shanghai as early as 2005.<sup>95</sup>
43. Although there is no available official data tracking the exact number and proportion of Hui people involved in “labor transfers,” there are indications that the Hui people in particular are significantly impacted. A free trade-zone official from Ningbo met with government leaders from both the Ningxia region and Linxia Prefecture in Gansu Province in 2020 to recruit Hui workers specifically, citing the importance of “ensuring social stability and harmony,” and “strengthening national unity.”<sup>96</sup> Such “labor transfer” coordination is discriminatory as it targets Hui communities to achieve political goals.
44. We do not currently have evidence that these government-coordinated labor transfers are coercive in nature, in contrast to the labor transfer programs organized by local governments in Xinjiang (see Section 4.1).<sup>97</sup> However, surveys suggest that the transfers are neither planned nor implemented in consultation with the affected communities, who have found that labor transfers disrupt social and cultural life in undesirable ways.
45. One 2014 study of the labor transfer programs in Zhangjiachuan Hui Autonomous County in Gansu province found that the 70 percent Hui population preferred to continue individual farming and to earn income without having to leave the region and work in other parts of the country.<sup>98</sup> A survey of Muslim “labor transfer” participants from Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture in Gansu province found that transferred laborers faced language barriers, difficulty finding Halal food, and lack of accommodation for religious observance, particularly for those traveling to eastern coastal cities where there was not a significant Muslim presence.<sup>99</sup> Despite their preferences, such communities have become dependent on the labor transfer system for income—in 2021, remittances from labor

transfers were more than half of local GDP in Zhangjiachuan county (1.77 billion RMB out of 3.39 billion RMB).<sup>100</sup>

### **3.3 Recommendations**

46. The Committee should recommend that the State Party:

- Specify the efforts made by the State party to involve the affected individuals and communities in designing and implementing various poverty alleviation projects in ethnic Hui regions, especially those entailing both temporary (as in the case of labor transfers) and permanent relocation of residents (as in the case of ecological migration), and to carry out those projects in accordance with its obligations under the Covenant. Please provide statistical data, disaggregated by region, on the number of land expropriations carried out and the number of persons relocated accordingly.
- Provide information on the steps taken to address the reportedly persistent discrimination faced by ethnic minority persons with rural household registration in accessing employment, social security, housing, health care, education and other social services.

## **Chapter 4. Violations of Hui Economic Rights**

### **4.1 Forced Labor in Xinjiang (Articles 6 & 11; List of Issues par. 16)**

47. There is evidence suggesting that Hui detainees in Xinjiang (see Section 1.2) have been subjected to forced labor: Hui persons have served for periods in and around Ürümchi at Wujiaqu Prison and Badaowan Vocational Education and Training Center where forced labor has been documented;<sup>101</sup> in one case, authorities have sent a Hui person to work in factories rather than allowing them to return home after being released from re-education camps.<sup>102</sup>
48. Xinjiang authorities have also promulgated official policies intended to forcibly displace residents for the purpose of performing forced labor as part of a political and cultural reform program. In 2018, the Yanqi Hui Autonomous County government in the XUAR issued Document No. 99 outlining a government-administered system of coercive relocation for labor, stating that “those who are transferred for work are not allowed to return without permission,” workers would be assessed based on “ideological education,” and administrative units would report on their progress in ideological training to the local Political Legal Committee and the Public Security Bureau.<sup>103</sup>
49. The scale of detentions of Hui and other Muslim-majority persons has also directly impoverished entire communities in the region. For example, a 2020 report describes 43 men in a village of around 60 households in Tacheng prefecture being sent to re-education camps. Without their labor, the main economic activity in the village, farming, was largely discontinued and the families remaining in the farming community no longer have sufficient income for necessities.<sup>104</sup> Thus, the mass detentions have infringed on the right of the families of the detained to an adequate standard of living (Article 11).

#### ***4.2 Deprivation of Social Benefits, Rights to Work and Education (Articles 6, 9 & 13)***

50. Chinese government officials have denied or threatened to deny public education, pensions, and other social benefits to compel Hui persons to comply with certain counter-extremism policies. This is in violation of their rights to work (article 6), social security (article 9), and education (article 13). For example, a Hui woman in Karamay prefecture in Xinjiang was threatened with the loss of her pension and her son's minimal living allowance if she did not renounce her religion.<sup>105</sup> In some cases, officials have coerced Hui migrants in Xinjiang to other parts of the regions to return to their registered residential locations by denying employment and public education for their children in the cities where they had been found work and lived for a long time.<sup>106</sup>

#### ***4.3 Employment Discrimination against Hui Muslims (Articles 2, 6; List of Issues par. 15)***

51. Hui have historically faced discrimination in the job market and the workplace. In recent years this discrimination has worsened because of the stigmatizing effect of government campaigns marginalizing and criminalizing Hui religious and cultural practices described in preceding sections. A 2020 academic study found that Muslim job seekers in China are more than 50 percent less likely to advance beyond an initial interview than Han Chinese job seekers, discrimination that would primarily affect Hui, Uyghur, other predominantly Muslim groups. The study also found that despite government mandates to prioritize ethnic minority applicants, state-owned enterprises are as likely as private companies to engage in discriminatory hiring.<sup>107</sup>

52. More recently, such pervasive discrimination has been compounded by religious restrictions in the workplace imposed by local authorities as part of the government's nationwide crackdown on religion in general. Since 2015, civil servants, teachers, and other public sector employees in Xinjiang have been banned from fasting during Ramadan;<sup>108</sup> Hui make up approximately 9 percent of the population of Xinjiang of the population. As early as 2018, in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, public sector employees have been prohibited from appearing at work wearing the white caps Hui men customarily wear.<sup>109</sup> Around 2016, the Chinese Communist Party warned its members of disciplinary measures if they believe in any religion, with state media publicized cases of CCP officials being subjected to disciplinary penalties for harboring religious beliefs.<sup>110</sup>

#### ***4.4 Recommendations***

53. The Committee should recommend that the State party:

- Provide information on any specific steps taken to ensure that no alternative or parallel system of forced labor is still in place, provide information on the steps taken to address reports about forced labour and physical and mental abuse of detainees allegedly involved in the so-called “vocational training programmes” operated by the State party, including through vocational training centres, for surplus rural workforce, particularly Uighurs, Tibetans, Huis and other ethnic minority groups; and indicate

what support is provided to families whose primary breadwinner is sent to such centres.

- Provide information on the trends in coverage of each social security scheme during the reporting period and the efforts made to expand the coverage of social security schemes, particularly among rural ethnic minority (including the Hui) migrant workers and workers in the informal economy or with non-standard forms of employment.

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