



**Australian Government**  
**Refugee Review Tribunal**

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# Country Advice

## China

China – CHN36797 – Xinjiang – Islam –  
Uighurs – Women – Sufism – Hanafis –  
Sunnis – Syncretic – Shamanism – Three  
Evils

17 June 2010

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**1. Please provide information on the type of Islam practiced in Xinjiang by Uighurs, with a particular emphasis on the practices of older women. What restrictions have been placed on Uighur women regarding the practice of Islam?**

Islam in Xinjiang is not homogenous; there are subtle regional variations in both the beliefs and practices of Uighurs. In general, however, Uighur Islamic practice can be described as both liberal and syncretic, infused with customs and rituals from previous regional religions, including both Buddhism and Shamanism. The religious role of women in Uighur society is significant; Uighur women are the keepers of religious and cultural knowledge, entrusted with the education of Uighur children. In the modern era, this traditional role has transformed Uighur women into a vanguard of Uighur national identity. This fact is well understood by the Chinese Communist Party and therefore Beijing has imposed even more severe religious restrictions on Uighur women than on the men.

This response is divided into two sections: the first provides an overview of Islam in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) and the restrictions imposed by the PRC government on its practice. The second is a more detailed examination of the religious practices and roles of Uighur women, as well a summary of the religious restrictions placed on them.

### **Islam in East Turkestan/Xinjiang**

The ancestors of the modern Uighurs<sup>1</sup> embraced Islam in stages over a period of five hundred years as successive military conquests, Silk Road trade, and Sufi missionary activity helped spread Islam from oasis to oasis. Islam became the state religion of the Karakhanid Khanate (centred on Kashgar) in the tenth century; however, the Islamic transformation of the region was not complete until the fifteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Prior to their conversion, the ancestors of the modern Uighurs were Manichaeans, Zoroastrians, Buddhists, or Nestorian Christians.<sup>3</sup> In some regions Uighurs, Kazakhs and Kyrgyz also practiced shamanism. The result of this religious palimpsest is a liberal, syncretic and heterogenous Islam that contains elements of Sufi mysticism, Buddhism and Shamanistic ritual. As a consequence, and despite Beijing's

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<sup>1</sup> The ethnonym Uighur (also spelt Uyghur) disappeared from common usage for approximately five hundred years, until it was embraced by Soviet and Chinese ethnographers while delineating the ethno-linguistic groups (*minzu*) of the PRC and Central Asia. The name suggests that modern Uighurs are the same, continuous ethno-linguistic cultural group as the historical original, an assertion strongly contended by many historians. See Gladney, D. 2003, 'China's Minorities: The Case Of Xinjiang And The Uyghur People', Commission On Human Rights: Sub-Commission on Promotion and Protection of Human Rights Working Group on Minorities, Ninth session, 12-16 May, pp.3-5 – Attachment 1

<sup>2</sup> Tang, L. 2005, 'A History of Uighur Religious Conversions (5th – 16th Centuries)', Asia Research Institute, Working Paper Series No. 44, June, pp.42-43 [http://www.ari.nus.edu.sg/docs/wps/wps05\\_044.pdf](http://www.ari.nus.edu.sg/docs/wps/wps05_044.pdf) – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 2

<sup>3</sup> Kamberi, D. 2005, 'Uyghurs and Uyghur Identity', Sino-Platonic Papers, Number 150, May, pp.18-21 – Attachment 3

claim to the contrary, radical Wahhabi/Deobandi/Salafi variants of Islam have few adherents among the Uighurs.<sup>4</sup>

Islam entered what is today modern China from the west, spread largely by Naqshbandi Sufi mystics.<sup>5</sup> Sufism is a mystical-ascetic branch of Islam whose goal is to achieve “an individual feeling of divine love (ashik) and unity with God which is independent of formal religious rules and regulations.” In other words, knowledge of God is a personal discovery rather than institutionalised in mosques, medressahs (colleges) or imams. Sufis, sometimes referred to as Dervishes, often seek inner truth via “altered states of consciousness”. This state can be achieved by “fasting, abstaining from sleep, ecstatic dancing (sema) using drums and flutes as instruments, and dhikr/zikr, the continuous repetition of a mantra-like formula to praise God.”<sup>6</sup>

As well as Sufi elements, Islam in Xinjiang has incorporated a number of elements from earlier religious beliefs and practices. The syncretic elements vary regionally, depending largely on the preceding religion of the particular region. Islam in the Tarim Basin is said to retain elements of Buddhism. One example of this legacy is the reported common superstition among Uighurs that they “are not allowed to step on ants, since they might be the incarnation of human beings.”<sup>7</sup> In northern regions, due to their proximity to the Kazakh steppes, Islam is said to retain elements of Shamanism. Sufism and Shamanism are complementary in many aspects and the term ‘Islamised Shamanism’ is occasionally employed to refer to Islam throughout Turkestan, where “ritual healing and prophecy [have] mingled with many traits of Sufism”.<sup>8</sup>

Consequently, the Islam practiced by Uighurs is neither institutionally monolithic nor homogenous. A number of sources describe distinct north-south and urban-rural variations.<sup>9</sup> One source suggests that Uighurs themselves are conscious of this diversity; “northern Uyghurs, who tend to be more secular and ‘modern’, look down on southern Uyghurs as backward, orthodox, and primitive and would have by no means allowed their children to marry into a southern Uyghur family.”<sup>10</sup> The extent to which this remains true today is unclear.

Despite the diversity of practice, Islam is uniformly central to Uighur identity throughout Xinjiang, and “embedded in many of their daily activities, such as greetings and exclamations, mode of dress, scrupulous personal cleanliness (including the consumption of halal food), and a sense of solidarity with other Muslims in the world.”<sup>11</sup> Respected Sinologist Colin Mackerras writes that Uighurs believe that “they should be loyal Muslims” and that to be Uighur is to be Muslim.<sup>12</sup> Dru Gladney agrees, arguing that all aspects of Uighur identity,

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<sup>4</sup> Dwyer, A. 2005, *The Xinjiang Conflict: Uyghur Identity, Language Policy, and Political Discourse*, East-West Center Washington, Policy Studies 15, p.70 – Attachment 7

<sup>5</sup> Dillon, M. 2001, *Religious Minorities and China*, Minority Rights Group International, November, p.17 – Attachment 4

<sup>6</sup> Kressing, F. 2007, ‘Shamans, Mullahs, and Dervishes – Islam and Mysticism in Turkestan’, Philologisch-Historische Fakultät, University of Augsburg, p.7 [http://www.philhist.uni-augsburg.de/lehrtstuehle/volkskunde/veranstaltungen/ss07/Religion\\_als\\_Bestandteil\\_von\\_Ethnizit\\_tskonstruktionen/Downloads/Shamans\\_Mullahs\\_Dervishes.pdf](http://www.philhist.uni-augsburg.de/lehrtstuehle/volkskunde/veranstaltungen/ss07/Religion_als_Bestandteil_von_Ethnizit_tskonstruktionen/Downloads/Shamans_Mullahs_Dervishes.pdf) – Accessed 8 June 2010 – Attachment 5

<sup>7</sup> Shichor, Y. 2005, ‘Blow Up: Internal and External Challenges of Uyghur Separatism and Islamic Radicalism to Chinese Rule in Xinjiang’, *Asian Affairs* – Attachment 6

<sup>8</sup> Kressing, F. 2007, ‘Shamans, Mullahs, and Dervishes – Islam and Mysticism in Turkestan’, Philologisch-Historische Fakultät, University of Augsburg, p.9 – Attachment 5

<sup>9</sup> Dwyer, A. 2005, *The Xinjiang Conflict: Uyghur Identity, Language Policy, and Political Discourse*, East-West Center Washington, Policy Studies 15, p.19 – Attachment 7

<sup>10</sup> Shichor, Y. 2005, ‘Blow Up: Internal and External Challenges of Uyghur Separatism and Islamic Radicalism to Chinese Rule in Xinjiang’, *Asian Affairs* – Attachment 6

<sup>11</sup> Dwyer, A. 2005, *The Xinjiang Conflict: Uyghur Identity, Language Policy, and Political Discourse*, East-West Center Washington, Policy Studies 15, p.19 – Attachment 7

<sup>12</sup> Mackerras, C. 2004, ‘Ethnicity in China: The case of Xinjiang’, *Harvard Asia Quarterly*, Winter

including Islam, have gained tremendous importance due to the oppressive nature of PRC policies and practice; “[e]ach marker of identity takes on salience and enhanced meaning in the context of significant opposition.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, the practice of Islam is more than faith, it is the rejection of demographic, linguistic and cultural Sinofication.<sup>14</sup> It is unclear the extent to which this fusion of religion and national identity Islam is conscious, let alone coordinated; however, Naqshbandi Sufism is historically noted for its political activism throughout South and Central Asia.<sup>15</sup>

The ‘oppositions’ faced by Uighur since the creation of the People's Republic of China have been many. Both the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution were violently hostile to both ethnic identity and religion; calls for “rapid cultural homogenization” were common during the Great Leap Forward and ethnicity was seen as an “obstacle to progress.”<sup>16</sup> The events of the Cultural Revolution were even more hostile. After a period of relative calm in the 1980s, the rapid collapse of the USSR, and the subsequent creation of Turkic successor states, the fear of separatism caused Beijing to recommence its ‘strike hard’ approach to Islam and other “backward customs”.<sup>17</sup>

Despite claims to the contrary by Beijing, few objective sources argue that radical Islam has gained purchase in Xinjiang.<sup>18</sup> Radical Islamic groups such the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) and the Turkistani Islamic Party (TIP) have little support theologically or politically, and since 2001 what capability they had has been seriously eroded; the leaders of both ETIM and TIP have been killed in Pakistan in recent years. A 2010 article in the *Jamestown Terrorism Monitor* states that ETIM has all but disappeared and TIP claims responsibility for incidents it clearly didn’t carry out, and isn’t capable of initiating.<sup>19</sup>

An October 2009 report by Amnesty International lists some of the general restrictions imposed on religious freedom in the XUAR, including: intervention in the appointment of local imams; the stationing of police both inside and outside mosques; the close monitoring of all religious activities; the effective banning of religious activities for all government employees, including teachers, police officers, and state enterprise workers; significant obstacles to undertaking the hajj to Mecca; and the banning of children under the age of eighteen from entering mosques or receiving any sort of religious education.<sup>20</sup>

Uighurs employed by the state have severe religious and cultural restrictions placed on them. *Reuters* states that government employees “cannot show any visible signs of religious affiliation, such as beards or headscarves”.<sup>21</sup> *The Guardian* reports that such restrictions are

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<sup>13</sup> Gladney, D. 1990, ‘The Ethnogenesis of the Uighur’, *Central Asian Studies*, Vol 9, No 1, p.13 – Attachment 9

<sup>14</sup> Bovingdon, G. 2004, *Autonomy in Xinjiang: Han Nationalist Imperatives and Uyghur Discontent*, East-West Center Washington, Policy Studies 11, p.5 – Attachment 10

<sup>15</sup> Dillon, M. 2001, *Religious Minorities and China*, Minority Rights Group International, November, p.17 – Attachment 4

<sup>16</sup> Bovingdon, G. 2004, *Autonomy in Xinjiang: Han Nationalist Imperatives and Uyghur Discontent*, East-West Center Washington, Policy Studies 11, p.19 – Attachment 10

<sup>17</sup> Tomas, D. 2007, ‘Uyghur identity emergence: the Chinese Achilles’ heel’, *Global Affairs*, Issue 5, 14 October <http://www.globalaffairs.es/en/uyghur-identity-emergence-the-chinese-achilles-heel/> – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 11

<sup>18</sup> Shichor, Y. 2005, ‘Blow Up: Internal and External Challenges of Uyghur Separatism and Islamic Radicalism to Chinese Rule in Xinjiang’, *Asian Affairs* – Attachment 6

<sup>19</sup> McGregor, A. 2010, ‘Will Xinjiang’s Turkistani Islamic Party Survive the Drone Missile Death of its Leader?’, *Jamestown Terrorism Monitor*, Volume VIII, Issue 10, 11 March, p.7 [http://www.jamestown.org/uploads/media/TM\\_008\\_04.pdf](http://www.jamestown.org/uploads/media/TM_008_04.pdf) – Accessed 9 June 2010 – Attachment 12

<sup>20</sup> Amnesty International 2009, *Uyghur Ethnic Identity under threat in China*, ASA 17/010/2009, April, p.3 – Attachment 13

<sup>21</sup> ‘China defends control over religion in Uighur region’ 2006, Uyghur Human Rights Project website, source: *Reuters*, 17 October <http://www.uhrp.org/articles/317/1/China-defends-control-over-religion-in-Uighur->

particularly strict during Ramadan.<sup>22</sup> The *Associated Press* reported that as of 2008 government employees were forbidden from fasting during Ramadan and restaurants are forbidden from closing during the holy month.<sup>23</sup> Since 2008 all Uighur Muslims have been banned from performing Tarawih prayers, “special nightly prayers performed during the holy fasting month of Ramadan.” Men have been reportedly “prevented from growing beards” and “women from covering their faces”; the Shaya County website reportedly states that “[f]or those that maintain beards and for the women who wear veils, we should take all effective measures to have them shave their beards and take off their veils”.<sup>24</sup>

The rules and restrictions imposed on Uighurs are constantly being expanded. In 2010 a report by *Radio Free Asia* referred to new rules in Shaya County in Aksu prefecture. The directives contain 10 new measures that state that they aim to “strengthen village management of grassroots religious organizations.” New requirements include: that all religious groups register with the village branch of the religious affairs department; religious sites must have monthly inspections; all special meetings must have approval from authorities and be attended by the authorities; village members must obtain approval of all texts to be used before all village gatherings for worship; a religious affairs department information officer must review the content of the texts in question and must be “advised of the specific situation in which the texts will be used in worship”.<sup>25</sup>

Another recent restriction is the banning of villagers from neighbouring towns attending each others’ mosques and religious ceremonies. *Radio Free Asia* reported in April 2009 that authorities had begun detaining and fining Uighurs for conducting prayers outside their home villages; “[s]everal hundred Uyghurs who gathered to pray at a Qariqash county shrine in Khotan prefecture, south of Kashgar, were surrounded by local police and detained for hours on March 26.” *Radio Free Asia* states that village authorities had confirmed over the phone that “cross-village worship” is considered a “social crime.” Fines must be paid before villagers are released from custody and can amount to up to 500 yuan fine. According to the report, the average yearly income for a village resident is 3,000 yuan.<sup>26</sup>

A 2008 article in *The New York Times* describes Communist Party edicts by the front door of a mosque in Khotan. The rules include that “the imam’s sermon at Friday Prayer must run no longer than a half-hour”; “prayer in public areas outside the mosque is forbidden”; “residents of Khotan are not allowed to worship at mosques outside of town”; “government workers and nonreligious people may not be ‘forced’ to attend services at the mosque... a generous wording of a law that prohibits government workers and Communist Party members from going at all.”<sup>27</sup> As stated previously, government workers are forbidden from practicing Islam.

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[region/China-defends-control-over-religion-in-Uighur-region.html](#) – Accessed 23 September 2009 – Attachment 14

<sup>22</sup> Branigan, T. 2008, ‘China officials tighten restrictions on Muslim practices’, *The Guardian*, 9 September <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/sep/09/china1> – Accessed 10 September 2008 – Attachment 15

<sup>23</sup> ‘Ramadan – A Time of Repression for Uyghur Muslims’ 2008, Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization website, source: *The Associated Press*, 30 September <http://www.unpo.org/content/view/8725/236/> – Accessed 26 November 2008 – Attachment 16

<sup>24</sup> ‘No Tarawih for China Muslims’ 2008, China Aid Association, 6 September <http://chinaaid.org/2008/09/06/no-tarawih-for-china-muslims/> – Accessed 8 September 2008 – Attachment 17

<sup>25</sup> ‘Muslims face new curbs’ 2010, *Radio Free Asia*, 26 May <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/directive-05252010175508.html> – Accessed 27 May 2010 – Attachment 18

<sup>26</sup> ‘Uyghurs targeted over prayers’ 2009, *Radio Free Asia*, 2 April <http://www.uyghuramerican.org/articles/2756/1/Uyghurs-Targeted-Over-Prayers/index.html> – Accessed 8 April 2009 – Attachment 19

<sup>27</sup> Wong, E. 2008, ‘Wary of Islam, China tightens a vise of rules,’ *The New York Times*, 19 October [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/19/world/asia/19xinjiang.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/19/world/asia/19xinjiang.html?_r=1&oref=slogin) – Accessed 20 October 2008 – Attachment 24

Uighurs wishing to undertake the hajj to Mecca can only do so via the Islamic Association of China (IAC), a “patriotic religious association” established by the CCP.<sup>28</sup>

### **The Role and Practices of Uighur Women**

Scholarly studies of the beliefs and practices of older Uighur women have not been located. Indeed, studies of Uighur women in general are few. The following summary is an examination of the roles, customs and practices of Uighur women in general, and the restrictions placed on such practices by the government of the People's Republic of China.

The Islamic practices and rituals of Uighur women have traditionally varied across Xinjiang. Evidence indicates that the main axis of variation is north-south, with women in the south practicing a more conservative observance of Islam.

According to a 2006 study paper, an important role that Uighur women play in promoting Uighur culture and identity is through traditional dances, performed at family gatherings. Performances, such as the ‘Twelve Mukam’, are combinations of narrative poems, songs, music and dance. While not political stories, their performance in Xinjiang is considered by some as a political act of defiance, in contempt of Sinofication. They are also deemed political for the fact that many of these performances date from a period in Uighur history when the region was perceived to be independent, peaceful and relatively prosperous.<sup>29</sup> Uighur history also features a number of heroines: the 18th-century heroine, Iparhan, “refused to become a concubine to the Qing emperor”; Nozugum, a woman who “joined the Kashgar uprising of 1825-26” is celebrated in Uighur poetry. *Radio Free Asia* also suggests that Rebiya Kadeer, the internationally known Uighur spokesperson, is indicative of the status of women in Uighur society.<sup>30</sup>

As indicated earlier, the Islam of Turkestan (Central Asia) is characterised as liberal and syncretic, compared to variants practiced elsewhere in the Islamic world. Perhaps as a consequence of this fact, Uighur women are not subject to the same strict rules of purdah (segregation of the sexes) that characterise societies in parts of Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Middle East. Rules of modesty and a traditional gender-based division of labour do exist.<sup>31</sup> The wearing of a headscarf to cover one’s hair is expected; however, males and females may intermingle in public and burqas are almost completely absent from Uighur culture. Uighur women who are employed by the state are not permitted to wear a head scarf; *The New York Times* states that even “the slightest sign of devotion, a head scarf on a woman, for example, could lead to a firing.”<sup>32</sup> *Radio Free Asia* states that all Uighur women are discouraged from wearing head scarfs as they denote “a separate, non-Chinese ethnic identity.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Congressional-Executive Commission on China 2006, ‘Islamic Congress establishes Hajj Office, issues new rules’, 30 May <http://www.cecc.gov/pages/virtualAcad/index.php?showsingle=53393> – Accessed 14 August 2008 – Attachment 20

<sup>29</sup> Smith, K. 2006, ‘Dance for Development: Uyghur women in the Chinese Diaspora Creating Self-Empowerment through Dance’, East-West Center Working Papers, No.25, pp.4-5 <http://www.eastwestcenter.org/fileadmin/stored/pdfs/IGSCwp025.pdf> – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 21

<sup>30</sup> Vandenbrink, R. 2009, ‘Strong Women in Uyghur History’, *Radio Free Asia*, 24 August <http://www.rfa.org/english/women/uyghur-women-08202009140517.html/in-history-08202009141230.html?textonly=1> – Accessed 17 September 2009 – Attachment 22

<sup>31</sup> Beller-Hann, I. 2001, ‘Work and Gender Among Uighur Villagers in Southern Xinjiang’, Centre for International Study & Research, p.3 <http://www.ceri-sciencespo.com/publica/cemoti/textes25/beller.pdf> – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 23

<sup>32</sup> Wong, E. 2008, ‘Wary of Islam, China tightens a vise of rules,’ *The New York Times*, 19 October [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/19/world/asia/19xinjiang.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/19/world/asia/19xinjiang.html?_r=1&oref=slogin) – Accessed 20 October 2008 – Attachment 24

<sup>33</sup> Hoshur, S. 2009, ‘Women Held over Party’, *Radio Free Asia*, 5 June <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/party-06052009144059.html> – Accessed 24 September 2009 – Attachment 25

An anthropological study conducted in the Khotan region of the southern Tarim Basin in 1951 (Jarring) indicates that the women of the region traditionally prayed at home while their husbands attended mosque.<sup>34</sup> No studies have been located that indicate that the same was true elsewhere in East Turkestan. Uighur women are not permitted to join Sufi orders; however, only women traditionally make pilgrimages to the tombs of Sufi saints. In more northerly regions of Turkestan, some Muslim women reportedly also perform shamanistic ceremonies for their communities. During such ceremonies, female shamans are said to invoke Sufi saints as “healing spirits”.<sup>35</sup>

Throughout the XUAR Uighur women do play an important role in Islam. A 2009 article in *The Guardian* states that Uighur women are traditionally in charge of “early Islamic education in the home.”<sup>36</sup> *Radio Free Asia* echoes *The Guardian*, suggesting that far from being “second-class citizens”, women are “viewed as the principal educators in Uyghur society, responsible for educating children and passing on traditions through the family.”<sup>37</sup> Aside from women, children under the age of 18 are not permitted to attend mosques or medressahs (Islamic colleges), meaning that women become responsible for Islamic education and observances for the first eighteen years of a child’s life.<sup>38 39</sup> Uighur women have informed Human Rights Watch that they are now afraid to teach their children religion in case any display of religious awareness on behalf of the children attracts the unwanted attention of authorities.<sup>40</sup>

Felice D. Gaer, Chair of the U.S. Commission On International Religious Freedom, remarked in 2009 that the PRC government has made substantial attempts to limit the participation of women in Islam and “weaken religious consciousness among women and among young people”, by preventing women from attending mosques, studying, reciting daily prayers or distributing literature that is religious.<sup>41</sup>

Uighur women intending to study Islam (known as Talip Kiz) must do so clandestinely.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, gatherings of Uighur women for religious purposes are also illegal; in April 2009 the Public Security Bureau (PSB) arrested thirty Uighur women in the Gulja suburb of

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<sup>34</sup> Beller-Hann, I. 2001, ‘Work and Gender Among Uighur Villagers in Southern Xinjiang’, Centre for International Study & Research, p.3 <http://www.ceri-sciencespo.com/publica/cemoti/textes25/beller.pdf> – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 23

<sup>35</sup> Kressing, F. 2007, ‘Shamans, Mullahs, and Dervishes – Islam and Mysticism in Turkestan’, Philologisch-Historische Fakultät, University of Augsburg, p.10 – Attachment 5

<sup>36</sup> Schluessel, E.T. 2009, ‘Islam in Xinjiang: an ancient rival for a young China’, *The Guardian*, 14 July <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2009/jul/14/uyghur-china-islam> – Accessed 24 September 2009 – Attachment 26

<sup>37</sup> Vandenbrink, R. 2009, ‘Strong Women in Uyghur History’, *Radio Free Asia*, 24 August <http://www.rfa.org/english/women/uyghur-women-08202009140517.html/in-history-08202009141230.html?textonly=1> – Accessed 17 September 2009 – Attachment 22

<sup>38</sup> ‘East Turkestan: China Bans Officials, State Employees, Children from Mosques’ 2006, Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) website, Source: *Radio Free Asia*, 7 February <http://www.unpo.org/content/view/3699/236/> – Accessed 24 September 2009 – Attachment 27

<sup>39</sup> US Commission on International Religious Freedom 2009, *Annual Report 2009 – People’s Republic of China*, May, p. 76 – Attachment 28

<sup>40</sup> Human Rights Watch 2005, *Devastating Blows: Religious Repression of Uighurs in Xinjiang*, vol. 17, no. 2(C), April, p.59 <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2005/china0405/china0405.pdf> – Accessed 31 October 2008 – Attachment 29

<sup>41</sup> ‘Statement Of Ms. Felice D. Gaer, Chair, U.S. Commission On International Religious Freedom’ 2009 in *The Uighurs: A History Of Persecution, Hearing Before The Subcommittee On International Organizations, Human Rights And Oversight Of The Committee On Foreign Affairs House Of Representatives One Hundred Eleventh Congress First Session*, Serial No. 111–28, 10 June, p.24 <http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/111/50294.pdf> – Accessed 9 June 2010 – Attachment 30

<sup>42</sup> ‘Won’t Anyone Listen to Justice?’ 2008, *Radio Free Asia*, 19 November <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/uyghur-justice-11192008165957.html> – Accessed 17 September 2009 – Attachment 31

Tashkewok. *Radio Free Asia* states that authorities in the XUAR have “banned private gatherings that involve the practice of Islam on suspicion that these could promote ethnic separatism.” Eighteen of the women were reportedly freed “after eight hours of interrogation, seven were sent for forced labor for 10 days, and five were sentenced to a month in jail... A pregnant woman in the last group was released after 13 days.”<sup>43</sup> Such rules are restricted to Uighur women. Among the Hui (ethnic Chinese Muslims), women are permitted to study and become Imams (Nu Ahong) of female-only mosques (Nu Si).<sup>44</sup>

The role of Uighur women in religious education, culture, language and identity is understood by PRC authorities. The Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP) Congress believes that this knowledge is behind a recent PRC program to recruit and transfer young female Uighurs to work in factories in urban areas of eastern China. The UHRP states that so far “thousands of Uyghur women have been removed from their families and placed into substandard working conditions thousands of miles from their homes”. It also states that women are intimidated into participating and that local leaders who refuse to comply with the policy are threatened “with removal from their posts”. PRC government propaganda promotes the program as an opportunity for Uighur women to learn, earn and experience life; however, the UHRP states that the experience for almost all women is ‘shattering’ and they suspect sinister motives behind the policy. They interpret the policy as part of the Chinese Communist Party’s broader policies to undermine Uighur culture, religion and national identity.<sup>45</sup>

## Attachments

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<sup>43</sup> Hoshur, S. 2009, ‘Women Held over Party’, *Radio Free Asia*, 5 June  
<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/party-06052009144059.html> – Accessed 24 September 2009 – Attachment 25

<sup>44</sup> Almog, L. 2010 ‘The other half of the sky’, International Museum of Women website  
<http://www.imow.org/economica/stories/viewStory?storyId=4799> – Accessed 19 February 2010 – Attachment 32

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