

# The Role of International Amnesty in China's Discrimination Conflict Against Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang 2018-2022

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## *Abstract*

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*One of the internal conflicts that occurred in the Chinese government was the human rights violations that occurred against ethnic Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang. Violations committed by the Chinese government include forced imprisonment, prohibition of freedom of religion, forced marriage and sexual harassment of women. Therefore, Amnesty International as a non-governmental organization that aims to promote and uphold human rights throughout the world, one of its roles is to protect the Uyghurs in Xinjiang. Amnesty International has played a role in addressing the Uyghur problem by taking action to interview victims of forced incitement by the Chinese government conducting several campaigns to lead public opinion about discrimination that occurs in China, and emphasizing the Chinese government that aims to reduce discrimination there and working with the world and international organizations to urge the Chinese government to reduce and minimize violence that occurs.*

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

China has the world's largest population of 1.4 billion, the majority of whom are descended from Han and Muslim Uighur minorities. Uyghur Muslims themselves are one of the official minority nations in China that embrace Islam and are an autonomous region of Chinese rule.<sup>1</sup> By looking at some of the potential possessed by China in various regions, one of the cities targeted by the Chinese is Xinjiang city, a city that has abundant natural resources such as gas, oil and others. In this regard, China wants to utilize natural resources and wants to control some areas, especially in Xinjiang. One of the acts of extremism carried out by the Chinese government is that some Muslims in China often experience harsh treatment such as (murder, enslavement, rape) <sup>2</sup> from the government in power. Since the Communist government came to power through the cultural revolution caused restrictions on religious and religious life in the PRC, so did Chinese Muslims, especially Uyghur Muslims.

The Chinese government sought to destroy Islamic culture by sending Han Chinese to Muslim-majority areas under the pretext of advancing the economy. However, Han people were sent to Xinjiang only to propagate Chinese rule in Xinjiang. After occupying important positions in the Chinese government, Han Han made a special policy for Uyghurs in Xinjiang with the aim of eliminating the religion of the Uighurs, Islam <sup>3</sup>. The discrimination of these crimes continues to this day against Uyghur Muslims in China which has led to genocide with the intent to destroy all or part of a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, approximately 200 people killed and injured 1,700 Uyghur residents who were victims of this violence. Ethnic cleansing efforts are carried out systematically, starting with the Chinese government's policy of cornering the existence of Uighur Muslims <sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> M. F. Saragih, 'TINJAUAN YURIDIS PELANGGARAN HAM TERHADAP MUSLIM UIGHUR DI CHINA DITINJAU DARI HUKUM HUMANITER', *Journal of Chemical Information and Modeling*, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Saragih.

<sup>3</sup> M. Rosyid, 'Menggugah Peran Hukum Humaniter Internasional Islam Dalam Mengurai Konflik Etnis Perspektif Sejarah', *Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam Dan Kemanusiaan*, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Saragih.

<sup>5</sup> Z. Amali, 'Amnesty Internasional Dan Organisasi Kerjasama Islam Dalam Memandang Konflik Etnis Muslim Uighur Di China', *Jurnal PIR : Power in International Relations*, 2020.

invited a lot of considerable attention to the international world both countries and international organizations such as Amnesty International, WUC, OHCHR, UNHCR, OIC etc. Amnesty International is a non-governmental organization that upholds human rights values which have become an obligation for AI to combat human rights discrimination that occurs in the international world. AI stressed that China has carried out several acts of violence and provided explanations on the fate of about one million Muslim-majority people arbitrarily detained in Xinjiang <sup>6</sup>.

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

The data collection technique used in this study is through literature review or documentation study. Therefore, in this study the author utilizes and studies material in the form of reference books, articles in newspapers, magazines, report reports, scientific journals, internet, e-books, theses, and other literature related to this research. The data analysis technique used by the author uses a deductive method, where the author can find out facts, be specific and can draw conclusions from the case. This deductive technique can be interpreted as a way of thinking that is carried out starting from things that are general and then go to things that are specific. Soit can be interpreted as a technique that uses Growth and Top-Down forms.

## **III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Historically, the Xinjiang region was better known as East Turkestan. The area of East Turkestan alone reaches 1.4 million square kilometers or one-fifth of the area of China<sup>7</sup>. The city was originally a Muslim province with the capital Kashga.<sup>8</sup> The beginning of the entry of Islam in this area was when the Uyghur community acted as an intermediary of trade between China and the West. It was thanks to this interaction between Arab, Persian and Turkish traders that made the Uyghur community begin to know and embrace Islam.<sup>9</sup> Since the Turkestan region was taken over by the Communist government in 1949, the number of Han Chinese who are followers of communism in the region has increased from 6.7% to 40.6%. With the taking of the region, their presence becomes the control of all major political functions and activities in the Xinjiang region. With encouragement by the Chinese government, they have also imposed a state of isolation and restriction on religious activities, and banned Uyghur

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<sup>6</sup> Amali.

<sup>7</sup> A. Q. Husainy, 'TINJAUAN YURIDIS DISKRIMINASI RASIAL TERHADAP MINORITAS MUSLIM DI UYGHURS DITINJAU DARI PERSPEKTIF HUKUM HUMANITER', 2018.

<sup>8</sup> A. e Edira, 'Diskriminasi Rasial Terhadap Minoritas Muslim Uighur Di China Ditinjau Dari Hukum Islam', 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Husainy.

Muslims from using their native language in some schools. Starting from this incident, it resulted in conflict between Uyghur Muslims and the Chinese government as well as ethnic conflicts between Uyghurs and Han tribes.<sup>10</sup>

The Chinese government has implemented an assimilation policy regarding Uyghur culture in 3 aspects of assimilation including:<sup>11</sup>

1. The decline in the use of regional languages in the political sphere
2. Restricting access to ethnic education, especially seen in the restriction of cultural education in some autonomous regions
3. Instituted patriotic and Chinese nationalist education campaigns in religious forums, and in primary and secondary schools, in the state's efforts to strengthen minority individuals' sense of loyalty to the Chinese state

Therefore, the Xinjiang region which also has strategic value is also a bargaining chip for China not to let go, because Xinjiang can be a buffer zone for China. In addition, Xinjiang is also often associated with Chinese rule in Central Asia, that is, if the city of Xinjiang experiences instability, it will interfere with China's national interests. This is due to the increasing number of illegal trafficking cases such as arms smuggling, as well as human trafficking both in and out of Central Asia<sup>12</sup>. Seeing Central Asia known as the issue of terrorism, the Xinjiang region is very important to keep it so that it is not easy to become the main route of exit and entry of terrorism in Chinese territory<sup>13</sup>

Some of the human rights violations committed by the Chinese government are:<sup>14</sup>

1. The crime of genocide forced
2. imprisonment and re-education
3. Prohibition of freedom of religion
4. violence against women

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<sup>10</sup> Husainy.

<sup>11</sup> Edira.

<sup>12</sup> D. Purbo, 'KEBIJAKAN ADAPTIF-STRATEGIK INDONESIA TERHADAP CHINA DALAM KASUS SUKU UIGHUR DI XINJIANG (2014-2019)', 2022.

<sup>13</sup> G. Karisma, 'Konflik Etnis Di Xinjiang: Kebijakan Monokultural Dan Kepentingan Negara China Terhadap Keutuhan Wilayah', *Jurnal Ilmiah Kajian Ilmu Sosial Dan Budaya*, 2018.

<sup>14</sup> D. N. Sagota, 'KEJAHATAN KEMANUSIAAN ( CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY ) DI NEGARA REPUBLIK RAKYAT TIONGKOK ( RRT ) TERHADAP MUSLIM ETNIS UIGHUR.', 2023.

In carrying out its mission in upholding human rights in the world, Amnesty International carries out various movements and agendas that are neatly and systematically arranged to achieve the main objectives. In 2016 Amnesty International handled cases in Norway, Hong Kong, Papua New Guinea about discrimination from the government and local residents against workers there. Therefore, with this, Amnesty International publishes the policy on the protection of sexual workers in the country, considering that the rights of sexual workers are sometimes still ignored and they often face discrimination from superiors. And the report also proves that workers do not get the right to protection from the state. So in this case AI has the task of carrying out several publications in the case in that country<sup>15</sup>

### **Amnesty International's role in China's discrimination conflict in Xinjiang.**

In carrying out its mission, AI conducted several interviews and in-depth investigations to find out what violations were committed by the Chinese government, this was done because the situation in Xinjiang did not improve and made the humanitarian crisis worse there. So in 2018, Amnesty International interviewed 100 ethnic Uyghurs to talk about their situation <sup>16</sup>. The interview found that one million Uyghurs were put in political indoctrination camps. In fact, the Chinese government has taken extreme measures to prevent accurate documentation of the situation in Xinjiang and obtaining reliable information about life in the camps is extremely difficult <sup>17</sup>. So the result of this interview is that some Uyghur Muslims are acquitted for violations they committed in accordance with the laws there. In addition, with Some Uyghur Muslims detained in the camp were allowed to contact their families via mobile phones.

### **Building public opinion**

In building public opinion in Xinjiang, Amnesty International has expanded its social networks and strengthened international media awareness of the situation in Xinjiang and called for support for human rights in the Xinjiang region. Amnesty International has also taken action to mobilize civil society, government and private companies in Xinjiang to take swift action against human rights violations in Xinjiang. Some of Amnesty International's campaigns in Xinjiang are:

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<sup>15</sup> Amnesty, 'Laporan Amnesty International 2020/2021', 2020.

<sup>16</sup> S. Mulyono, 'Amnesty Internasional - Etnis Uyghur Diperlakukan Diskriminatif', 2018.

<sup>17</sup> Mulyono.

I. China's Secret Shame: Mass Detentions, Surveillance and Repression in Xinjiang Campaign

The campaign, built by Amnesty International in 2018, aims to reduce surveillance practices and eliminate mass surveillance practices carried out by Chinese authorities against Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang. In addition, the campaign calls on the Chinese government to provide adequate protection of human rights and minority rights in the region. The result of this campaign was that it succeeded in raising international awareness about the mistreatment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang, including mass detentions, strict surveillance, and the efforts of the Chinese government. In addition, the campaign has prompted several countries and international organizations to condemn China's actions and call for human rights protection for Uyghurs. One of the organizations involved in this issue is the OIC, where this organization fully supports the campaign carried out by Amnesty, but the efforts of the OIC are not perfect because they are still tied to the BRI project from China itself <sup>18</sup>

II. My Body My Rights campaign

In 2021, Amnesty International held a campaign in Xinjiang called My Body My Rights aimed at stopping the control and criminalization of sexuality and reproduction <sup>19</sup>. The campaign comes as Xinjiang continues to see systematic human rights abuses targeting Uyghur women including forced contraceptives and sterilization. Amnesty International has criticized the government for stopping these practices and protecting the reproductive and sexual rights of Uyghur women. The campaign in Xinjiang affirms that all people have their own sexual and reproductive rights.

Amnesty International calls on governments to stop using criminal punishment to control people's sexuality and reproduction, ensure that sexual and reproductive health services, education and information are available and accessible, and countries must ban all forms of discrimination and violence taking place in Xinjiang <sup>20</sup>. So with the campaign carried out by Amnesty International, China cannot immediately stop its discrimination because they have and cling to their ideology, namely a very strong nationalist ideology. Which in this ideology views that China exists as a powerful superior state and has the right to control its territory by whatever means they do. But with this campaign, Amnesty International has increased international pressure on the

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<sup>18</sup> Amnesty.

<sup>19</sup> A.Internasional, 'Tubuh Saya Adalah Hak Saya', 2022.

<sup>20</sup> A.Internasional.

Chinese government to respect human rights and seek to work with several countries and organizations to denounce China's actions.

### **Emphasis on Government**

Amnesty International also held the Chinese government accountable for the mass detention of ethnic Uyghurs in Xinjiang internment camps<sup>21</sup>. Amnesty International also wrote to the Chinese side, especially to the prison authorities of the autonomous administration in Xinjiang and some Chinese government leaders urging the release of detained Uyghurs. Amnesty International Indonesia Director Usman Hamid said: "We also urge the Chinese government to immediately stop the systematic repression, and provide an explanation for the fate of the approximately one million Muslims detained in China's Uyghur autonomous region"<sup>22</sup>.

In 2021, Amnesty International also called on other countries if any community or part of the Uyghur Muslim community is safeguarded, protected and not to repatriate them to China for fear that they will be treated the same as those already in detention camps. Amnesty International, along with other human rights organizations, urged the United Nations to pressure China to end its detention of Uyghur Muslims. Later in 2021, the OIC also spoke out regarding the case that occurred in Xinjiang, but the OIC's role in this case was not too strong due to China's economic factors with OIC countries. One of the factors is because of China's unwillingness to cut economic ties with OIC countries<sup>23</sup>.

One of the obstacles when the OIC wants to voice and make efforts that encourage human rights in Xinjiang, the OIC cannot move freely, because the OIC has agreed with the Chinese government to build a project under the name OBOR (One Belt One Road). This project cooperates with major Islamic countries in the Middle East with the majority population engaged in oil. This project is carried out by China to build land, air, sea transportation with the OIC to build the world economy, so with this the role of the OIC in helping to voice human rights in Xinjiang is less efficient<sup>24</sup>.

With Amnesty International putting some emphasis on the Chinese government, it is not certain that discrimination in Xinjiang will stop immediately. However, with the

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<sup>21</sup> S. F, 'ACT Segera Kirimkan Tim Kemanusiaan Untuk Uighur', 2018.

<sup>22</sup> Mulyono.

<sup>23</sup> Amali.

<sup>24</sup> S. Reiha, 'Apa Itu OBOR, Jalur Sutra Modern China Yang Jadi Polemik RI? CNBC Indonesia.', 2019.

emphasis of the state as well as groups, organizations such as Amnesty International can play an important role in raising the international community's awareness of the situation in Xinjiang and stepping up on the Chinese government to make immediate changes. Continued international pressure may also affect the Chinese government's future policies and actions.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

The Uyghur Muslim ethnic conflict in Xinjiang carried out by the Chinese government is a humanitarian conflict that leads to human rights violations. As we discussed above, that human rights are fundamental basic human rights that exist in each person that cannot be separated based on background, ethnicity, religion and race and this element cannot be bought and sold, deprived let alone eliminated. So if there is a case like Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang must be dealt with firmly. This conflict received responses from various international communities as well as international organizations and INGO. One of them is Amnesty International which is an organization that moves to combat human rights violations in parts of the world with its principles of neutral, impartial and independent. In addition, there are also international organizations that have responded to the case of Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang, including the United Nations and HRW. It is hoped that with the presence of several roles of the state, IGO and INGO in the world can reduce the discrimination that has been experienced by Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang and immediately order the Chinese government to release and stop these violations.

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