## Appendix: Xinjiang timeline

This basic timeline of events in Xinjiang over the past decade is based on several sources. The Xinjiang Documentation Project at the University of British Columbia is the main source for events prior to 2018. Briefs from the *Made in China Journal*, which in turn are based on several media sources, are the key source for events from 2018 onwards.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>25–26 June 2009</td>
<td>Allegations of the sexual assault of a Han woman by Uyghur colleagues trigger the lynching of Uyghur workers by Han migrant workers in a toy factory in Shaoguang, Guangdong Province. At least two Uyghur workers are killed and 118 people, mostly Uyghurs, are wounded.</td>
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<td>5 July 2009</td>
<td>A lack of government response to the events in Shaoguang triggers mass protests in Ürümqi, which quickly escalate into interethnic violence and police shooting. According to official figures, 197 people are killed and 1,721 injured, the majority of whom are Han. More than 1,000 Uyghurs are arrested or disappeared, mosques are temporarily closed, and internet and phone communications severely restricted.</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>Following the Ürümqi uprising of July 2009, officials in Xinjiang report that approximately 40,000 riot-proof high-definition surveillance cameras have been installed throughout the region.</td>
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<td>28 October 2013</td>
<td>Three Uyghurs drive a truck into a crowd in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, resulting in two deaths and 42 people injured. The three Uyghurs also die. This incident is alleged to be the first act of political violence perpetrated by Uyghurs outside Xinjiang.</td>
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<td>19 December 2013</td>
<td>At a Politburo meeting, President Xi Jinping announces a new ‘Strategic Plan’ for Xinjiang, which the state media calls ‘a major altering of the region’s strategy’. The plan makes it a primary task to maintain social stability and an enduring peace in Xinjiang. This signals a shift in China’s strategy in the region, from concentrating on economic growth to aiming for a combination of maintaining social stability and promoting economic development.</td>
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<td>January 2014</td>
<td>Prominent Uyghur Ilham Tohti, a scholar of economics at the Central Minzu University in Beijing and an advocate for the rights of Uyghurs, is arrested in Beijing and transferred to a detention centre in Xinjiang.</td>
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1 March 2014  A mass knife attack at a railway station in Kunming, Yunnan Province, kills 31 people and injures more than 140. Local authorities blame ‘separatists from Xinjiang’ for the attack. This incident is characterised by state media as ‘China’s 9/11’.

30 April 2014  A bomb and knife attack at a railway station in Ürümqi results in the deaths of the two attackers and one bystander, with 79 people injured. Local authorities describe the event as a ‘violent terrorist attack’ and blame Uyghurs.

22 May 2014  Four-wheel-drive vehicles carrying explosives collide in a busy street market in Ürümqi, killing 43 people and injuring more than 90, with most of the victims ethnic Han. In response, officials in Beijing promise a merciless campaign against Uyghur separatists, with President Xi pledging to initiate a ‘strike first’ (先发制敌) strategy through a ‘People’s War on Terror’ (反恐人民战争).

Mid-2014  The reeducation campaign begins when provincial authorities in Xinjiang demand that Uyghur migrants in urban areas within the province return to their hometowns to obtain a new identity card, called the People’s Convenience Card (人民便民卡), which is supposed to work as a passbook for these migrants to return to cities. However, it turns out that most rural-born Uyghurs are ineligible for the card, resulting in their mobility within Xinjiang being significantly restricted. The People’s Convenience Card is discontinued in May 2016.

28 July 2014  Hundreds of protesting Uyghur civilians are reportedly killed by police in Yarkand County in Xinjiang. The police shooting is believed to be the deadliest incident of state violence in China since the 2009 uprising in Ürümqi. The most reliable accounts suggest that heavy-handed religious restrictions on the eve of one of Islam’s most important holy days are the key reason for the violence.

23 September 2014  After a two-day hearing before the Ürümqi People’s Intermediate Court, Ilham Tohti is found guilty of ‘separatism’ and sentenced to life imprisonment. All his assets are seized. According to reports, Tohti is held in solitary confinement until at least early 2016. He is denied the right to communicate with family and friends aside from minimal visits.
December 2014  The Chinese Government publishes a list of '75 behavioural indicators of religious extremism'. While some are considered reasonable examples of incitement to violence, such as 'calling for jihad', many are vague and highly questionable—for instance, 'storing large amounts of food at home' and 'suddenly quitting smoking and drinking'. The list also criminalises numerous forms of normative Islamic practice.

29 May 2015  The World Bank approves funding for the Xinjiang Technical and Vocational Education and Training Project, which aims to 'build high-quality teaching and management teams, upgrade school facilities and equipment, offer short-term training programs to rural farmers and urban migrant workers, and provide technical services to local communities and enterprises' in the city of Ürümqi. Given the similarities with the language the Chinese Government later uses to describe reeducation camps in Xinjiang, not to mention the fact that a 'sister school' in Yarkand sponsored by one of the schools funded by the World Bank purchases and installs razor wire and other prison/military equipment, in the following years, observers raise concerns that World Bank funding may have been used for surveillance-related activities in Xinjiang.

29 August 2016  Chen Quanguo becomes Party Secretary of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. For the previous five years, he was Party Secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Region.

14 February 2017  Five civilians are killed by three Uyghur suicide attackers in a knife assault near Hotan, Xinjiang.

4 March 2017  The Department of Justice in Xinjiang orders that 'educational transformation centres' (教育转化中心) be established throughout Xinjiang. Chinese officials describe these centres as schools where students will learn Mandarin, improve job skills, pursue hobbies, and, most importantly, get rid of 'religious extremist thought'. However, Agence France-Presse later reveals that these centres operate more like jails than schools, where detainees are kept under tight control in locked cells by guards equipped with shackles, tear gas, Tasers, stun guns, and spiked clubs.
Local authorities impose tougher surveillance measures on Uyghurs. More than 7,500 ‘convenience’ police stations are constructed. The Xinjiang Government claims the ‘zero-distance proximity’ of the convenience police stations will ensure 24-hour surveillance and swift responses to emergencies. The authorities also hire more than 90,000 security workers, most of whom are untrained Uyghur and Kazakh, low-wage assistant police (协警). Their primary role is in the convenience police stations, but they are also assigned to low-level positions in camps and detention centres.

A spokesperson for Leon Technology, a Chinese private security technology company, says close to US$8 billion has been invested in the technology and information industries in Xinjiang, and describes the process of clearing the ‘thick atmosphere’ of Kashgar with facial recognition cameras. The spokesperson says the security technology industry in Xinjiang has ‘unlimited potential’ because China’s international development strategy includes expansion into markets that contain 60 per cent of the world’s Muslim population.

It is reported that Uyghurs in some areas are required to install surveillance apps on their mobile phones and are assigned ‘safety scores’, with those deemed ‘unsafe’ sent to reeducation camps.

It is reported that hundreds of thousands of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang are detained in political reeducation camps. Detainees include several prominent Uyghur figures, such as football star Erfan Hezim (detained from April 2018 to March 2019), musician Abdurehim Heyit (detained since April 2017), and Professor Rahile Dawut (detained since December 2017).

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination releases a report in which it expresses concerns about the human rights situation in Xinjiang and calls for the immediate release of all wrongfully and unlawfully detained individuals, as well as the end of ethnoreligious profiling. However, Chinese officials continue to claim that the reeducation centres are ‘vocational education and employment training centres’ and that Xinjiang is currently ‘enjoying overall social stability, sound economic development, and harmonious coexistence of different ethnic groups’.
6 November 2018  The UN Human Rights Council calls on China to address human rights issues, including its treatment of Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang. In response, China’s representatives defend the country’s human rights record and dismiss the UN assessment as ‘politically driven’ and ‘fraught with bias’.

Mid-November 2018  Led by Canada, 15 Western ambassadors jointly issue a letter requesting a meeting with Xinjiang’s Communist Party leaders to provide an explanation of the alleged human rights abuses in the region, but their request is rebuffed by the Chinese Government.

5 December 2018  UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet requests permission to visit Xinjiang. Under increasing international pressure, China responds that UN officials are welcome to visit the region on the condition they do not interfere in China’s internal affairs.

Early December 2018  International media starts to detail the emergence of a forced labour regime in factories attached to reeducation camps in Xinjiang. It is reported that people detained in the camps are forced to work long hours in factories with no or minimal pay. They are also required to learn Mandarin and study party propaganda, while not being allowed to leave the factories or contact their families without permission.

February 2019  In an attempt to dispel international criticism of its treatment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang, China releases a proof-of-life video of Abdurehim Heyit, a Uyghur musician who disappeared in 2017 and was rumoured to be dead. However, this action backfires, prompting other Uyghurs abroad to take to social media to demand the Chinese Government disclose the whereabouts of their loved ones.

February 2019  Ethical hacker Victor Gevers exposes a data breach suffered by SenseNets, a former subsidiary of the Chinese company Sense-time that specialises in facial recognition and crowd analysis technology and works with the Chinese police. The breach reveals that SenseNets has been assisting Chinese authorities in closely tracking the locations and identities of almost 2.6 million people in Xinjiang.

14 June 2019  Prominent Uyghur writer Nurmuhammad Tohti dies. He was detained in an internment camp in Xinjiang from November 2018 to March 2019. His granddaughter, who is based in Canada, reveals that Tohti was denied treatment for diabetes and heart disease, and was only released from the internment camp after he became incapacitated due to his medical condition.
American universities begin reevaluating their collaborations and partnerships with Chinese companies after media reports that the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and at least one other American university are still in partnerships with iFlytek, a Chinese AI company whose voice recognition software is used to securitise Xinjiang.

Twenty-two states, including Australia, Canada, Germany, and the United Kingdom, co-sign a letter to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights condemning China’s actions in Xinjiang. In response, ambassadors of 37 other countries, including Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and North Korea, pen a letter praising China’s ‘achievements in the field of human rights’, including its treatment of Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang.

China’s State Council Information Office releases a white paper that details the necessity and effectiveness of vocational education and training centres in Xinjiang in helping China counter the threat of terrorism.

Some officials in China claim that up to 90 per cent of Uyghurs have been released from the centres and ‘returned to society’, but there is little evidence to support these claims as camps continue to operate.

Scholars at Risk, a US-based international network of academic institutions organised to support and defend the principles of academic freedom and the human rights of scholars around the world, issues a letter to Chinese officials, calling for the halt of the execution of Tashpolat Tiyip, a renowned Uyghur academic who was abducted and sentenced to death following a secret trial in 2017.

A video emerges showing hundreds of men blindfolded and bound during what is geolocated as a mass transfer in April 2019 at a train station in Korla, Xinjiang. At roughly the same time, at an event on the sidelines of a UN summit, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi claims China has not seen a single case of violent terrorism in the past three years, and defends the camps on the grounds that they ‘are schools that help the people free themselves from terrorism and extremism and acquire useful skills’.

Jailed Uyghur scholar Ilham Tohti is awarded the Vaclav Havel Prize, which honours outstanding civil society action in defence of human rights.
Early October 2019  The United States imposes visa restrictions on Chinese officials implicated in repression in Xinjiang and begins blocking US companies from trading with tech companies that support violations of human rights in Xinjiang.

Late October 2019  Competing statements on China’s practices in Xinjiang are issued by two groups of UN member countries, with a British representative raising human rights concerns and a Belarusian delegate endorsing China’s approach to ‘combating terrorism’.

Early November 2019  The World Bank decides to downscale its project supporting vocational schools in Xinjiang (see the entry for 29 May 2015). It discontinues funding for partner schools in southern Xinjiang while continuing to fund the five schools in Ürümqi that are directly supported by the project.

16 November 2019  *The New York Times* analyses 403 pages of internal Chinese Government documents on Xinjiang, which provide insight into the secretive policy decisions on the mass incarceration of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in the area. One of the most striking revelations concerns the downfall of Wang Yongzhi, a veteran Han official in Xinjiang who prioritised economic growth in his locality over increased mass detention. The documents also discuss how officials should explain the disappearance of parents to Uyghur students returning from residential boarding schools. Discussions among Chinese officials about the mass detention of Muslim minorities are also disclosed, with Chen Quanguo, Party Secretary of Xinjiang, demanding his staff ‘round up everyone who should be rounded up’. More strikingly, the documents link the reeducation campaign in Xinjiang directly to President Xi through previously unpublished speeches that he delivered to local officials in 2014. In these, Xi calls for ‘absolutely no mercy’ in a crackdown on ‘terrorism and separatism’.

Late November 2019  The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists leaks another trove of Chinese official documents on Xinjiang, including a secret directive on the inner workings and management of detention centres in Xinjiang. It is disclosed that Zhu Hailun, Deputy Party Secretary of Xinjiang, mandated that the reeducation camps be run like high-security prisons, with strict discipline, punishment, no ‘abnormal deaths’, and no escapes.
Early December 2019  Scientific journal publishers Springer Nature and Wiley announce the reevaluation of some of their previous publications related to ethnic minorities in China due to growing ethical concerns. Specifically, there are worries that scientists backed by the Chinese Government have been using DNA or facial-recognition technology to study vulnerable ethnic minority groups in China—most notably, Uyghurs in Xinjiang—without free, informed consent.

December 2019  Chinese state media launches personal attacks on foreign experts on Xinjiang, including Darren Byler, and threatens Asiye Abdu-laheb, a Uyghur woman in the Netherlands who helped leak documents to the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists.

January 2020  More documents are leaked detailing the surveillance and incarceration of hundreds of Muslim individuals from the Karakax region in Xinjiang. They show that as many as 10 per cent of detainees were detained due to violations of family planning policies as part of the ‘zero illegal births’ program.

March 2020  The Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) releases a report on the labour conditions of Uyghur and other ethnic minority individuals who are transferred from Xinjiang to factories across China. ASPI estimates that at least 80,000 Uyghurs were relocated from Xinjiang to factories between 2017 and 2019, where they worked ‘under conditions that strongly suggest forced labour’. These factories include suppliers of well-known brands such as Apple, Nike, Amazon, Samsung, Zara, H&M, Microsoft, Mercedes-Benz, and Uniqlo.

May 2020  The US Senate and House of Representatives overwhelmingly pass a bill calling for targeted sanctions against Chinese officials responsible for the oppression of Uyghurs in Xinjiang.

May 2020  The Chinese Government is reported to have resumed its job placement scheme for tens of thousands of Uyghurs who have completed compulsory programs at reeducation camps in Xinjiang, as the outbreak of COVID-19 seems to have been brought under control within the country. Under the job placement scheme, many Chinese provinces are required to meet a quota for the number of Uyghurs whom they will take in to work in their factories.
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<td>Late June 2020</td>
<td>Associated Press (AP) investigates birth-control practices in Xinjiang. Based on government statistics, state documents, and interviews with ex-detainees, family members, and a former detention camp instructor, AP finds that forced birth control in Xinjiang is far more widespread and systematic than previously known and mass detention is used both to deter minority families from having children and to punish those who have failed to comply with birth-control policies in the past.</td>
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<td>20 July 2020</td>
<td>The US Commerce Department blacklists another 11 Chinese textile and technology companies that are implicated in forced labour and DNA collection and analysis targeting Uyghurs. This is the third group of Chinese companies and institutions that has been added to the US blacklist over human rights violations in Xinjiang.</td>
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<td>23 July 2020</td>
<td>More than 190 organisations from 36 countries call for formal commitments from clothing brands to sever ties with suppliers implicated in using forced labour in Xinjiang and to stop sourcing anything from Xinjiang in the next 12 months.</td>
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<td>31 July 2020</td>
<td>The US Treasury Department blacklists the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (Bingtuan), due to its involvement in the detention camp and forced labour system in Xinjiang.</td>
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<td>Early August 2020</td>
<td>Merdan Ghappar, a Uyghur fashion model for the Chinese online retailer Taobao, sends a video and multiple text messages directly from the inside of a reeducation camp. His testimony provides rare firsthand insights into the conditions inside the camp and the situation during the COVID-19 pandemic.</td>
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<td>1 September 2020</td>
<td>In response to questions from CNN about forced birth control in Xinjiang, Chinese officials acknowledge via fax that birth rates in Xinjiang declined by nearly one-third in 2018 compared with 2017 but deny any forced sterilisation or genocide by authorities in the region, claiming the significant reduction in birth rates is related to ‘the comprehensive implementation of the family planning policy’.</td>
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<td>Early September 2020</td>
<td>Disney’s new movie <em>Mulan</em> provokes a global backlash over its links to Xinjiang when it is revealed the film was partly shot in the region and its credits include thanks to authorities responsible for camp operations in the area. Amid intensifying calls overseas to boycott the movie, Chinese authorities are reported to have told major domestic media outlets not to cover the release of the movie.</td>
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14 September 2020  The US Customs and Border Protection agency issues five separate Withhold Release Orders imposing restrictions on cotton, computer parts, and hair products made by six entities in Xinjiang.

15 September 2020  Swedish clothing brand H&M announces that, due to concerns about alleged forced labour in Xinjiang, it will phase out its business relationships with producers in the area within the next 12 months and will no longer source cotton from the region.

16 September 2020  In her first State of the Union address, new President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, singles out China’s human rights abuses in Xinjiang and Hong Kong, and announces the European Union will overhaul its sanctions scheme, which may include changing sanctions implementation from unanimous decisions among all EU members to qualified majority voting.

17 September 2020  China’s State Council releases a white paper on employment and labour rights in Xinjiang, which is largely perceived as an attempt to defend its approach to Uyghurs and other minority peoples amid growing international criticism of its human rights abuses in Xinjiang. The white paper provides figures on the ‘employment-oriented training program’ in Xinjiang. It reports that an average of 1.3 million workers, including 415,400 from southern Xinjiang, went through ‘vocational training’ every year between 2014 and 2019 and the average annual ‘relocation of surplus rural labour’ exceeded 2.76 million people, with more than 60 per cent coming from southern Xinjiang. Researchers argue that the figures amount to a tacit admission of forced labour in Xinjiang and hint at the scope of internment camps in the region.

22 September 2020  The US House of Representatives passes the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, which prevents importers from sourcing goods produced either wholly or in part in Xinjiang unless the US Government can verify with ‘clear and convincing’ evidence that the goods are not produced using forced labour.

22 September 2020  French President Emmanuel Macron calls for an international mission under the aegis of the United Nations to visit China’s Xinjiang over growing concerns in the international community about the Muslim Uyghur minority in the region.
24 September 2020  The ASPI, a think tank based in Canberra, releases a new report documenting the detention system in Xinjiang. Based on satellite imagery, the report finds there are more than 380 'suspected detention facilities' in Xinjiang—approximately 40 per cent more than previously estimated. The report also finds that thousands of mosques in Xinjiang have been damaged or destroyed over the past three years, leaving fewer than 15,000 mosques in the region. These findings contradict Chinese authorities’ claims that ‘trainees in education and vocational training centres’ in Xinjiang had ‘graduated’ by late 2019 and that religious beliefs in the region were protected and respected. In response to the release of the new report, China’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin accuses ASPI of being ‘imbued with ideological prejudice’ and ‘practically an anti-China “vanguard”’, which he claims publishes ‘a concoction of lies against China’ with the support of foreign funding.

26 September 2020  At the third central symposium on work related to Xinjiang, President Xi asserts that ‘practice has proven that the party’s strategy for governing Xinjiang in the new era is completely correct’, claiming that current policies in Xinjiang have brought ‘unprecedented achievements’ in economic growth, social development, and improvement in people’s livelihoods and that ‘the sense of gain, happiness, and security among the people of all ethnic groups has continued to increase’. Xi adds that China’s Xinjiang strategy ‘must be adhered to in the long term’. He asks the whole party to ‘treat the implementation of the Xinjiang strategy as a political task’ and to ‘work hard to implement it completely and accurately to ensure that the Xinjiang work always maintains in the correct political direction’. He also emphasises the importance of ‘continuing the direction of Sinicising Islam to achieve the healthy development of religion’ and the necessity of ‘telling the story of Xinjiang in a multilevel, all-round, and three-dimensional manner, and confidently propagate the excellent social stability of Xinjiang’.

30 September 2020  The US House of Representatives passes a second Bill relating to forced labour that, if enacted, would require publicly listed companies in the United States to disclose in their annual reports whether they or their affiliated entities have imported goods originating from Xinjiang or containing materials sourced from the region.
Late September 2020  It is reported that at least five organisations will no longer assist companies in auditing their supply chains in Xinjiang, indicating that increasingly tight government surveillance and control in the region have made it too hard to assess whether entities in Xinjiang are using forced labour.

6 October 2020  During a meeting on human rights at the United Nations, Germany leads a group of 39 countries urging China to respect the rights of its Muslim minorities in Xinjiang and allow UN rights observers 'immediate, meaningful, and unfettered access' to Xinjiang. The 39 countries include most of the EU member states and countries such as the United States, Canada, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. At the same meeting, Cuba issues a statement on behalf of 45 countries in support of China's policy in Xinjiang. Turkey, having joined neither group, makes a separate statement expressing its concern about the human rights situation in Xinjiang.

Early October 2020  The Chinese Government confirms to the United Nations the death of Abdulghafur Hapiz, a Uyghur man believed to have been held in an internment camp in Xinjiang since 2017. Although Hapiz's disappearance was registered with the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID) in April 2019, the Chinese Government only recently responded to formal inquiries about this man's circumstances, informing WGEID that Hapiz died of 'severe pneumonia and tuberculosis' on 3 November 2018.

13 October 2020  China is reelected to the UN Human Rights Council amid sustained international concerns about the Chinese Government's human rights violations in Xinjiang. However, its re-election is achieved with 139 votes—41 fewer than its previous tally.

15 October 2020  US Customs and Border Protection says a shipment of 1,900 pairs of gloves will be held at the Port of Los Angeles unless Overland, the American company seeking to import the gloves, can prove they were not made with forced labour. The gloves are believed to have been made by Yili Zhuowan Garment Manufacturing Company—the factory described in Chapter 12 of this volume, which is among the companies shown to use forced labour and prohibited from importing goods into the United States.
Mid-October 2020  The Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy Committee of the British House of Commons issues individual letters to key stakeholders in the fashion, retail, and information technology industries—including Adidas, H&M, Amazon, and the Walt Disney Company—as part of its inquiry into the issue of forced labour in Xinjiang. The committee requests written feedback on how each company manages their supply chains to maintain visibility and combat modern slavery, and invites a representative from each company to present oral evidence at a public hearing.

20 October 2020  The Xinjiang Development Research Centre of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences releases an investigative report on the ‘Employment of Ethnic Minorities in Xinjiang’. The report states that ‘people of all ethnic groups in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region voluntarily choose their jobs and they are never forced to work outside the region’ while dismissing the allegation by Western think tanks of ‘large-scale forced labour in Xinjiang’ as being ‘profoundly untrue, unreasonable, and untenable’. The report says the investigation team made field trips to more than 70 enterprises, rural labour cooperatives, and business startups in Ili Kazak and Kezilesu Kirgiz autonomous prefectures and Kashgar, Hotan, and Aksu prefectures, and visited cities outside Xinjiang, including Beijing and Tianjin.

21 October 2020  The Better Cotton Initiative (BCI), which had already suspended licensing and assurance activities in Xinjiang in March 2020, decides to cease all field-level activities in Xinjiang effective immediately, including capacity-building, data monitoring, and reporting. The decision follows an external review of cotton sourcing in Xinjiang, commissioned by the BCI, amid increasing international scrutiny of forced labour and other human rights abuses in Xinjiang.

Late October 2020  A Canadian parliamentary committee report concludes that China’s treatment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang constitutes genocide and calls for the Canadian Government to sanction officials implicated in the Chinese Government’s policies in Xinjiang. In response, China’s Foreign Ministry dismisses the committee’s report as ‘full of lies and disinformation’. It also warns Canadian lawmakers to stop their ‘blatant interference’ in China’s internal affairs.

Late October 2020  The Solar Energy Industries Association calls for companies to move their supply chains out of Xinjiang due to growing concerns about human rights abuses in the region.
Late October 2020  According to an official of the Aksu Huafu Textile Factory, a branch of Huafu Fashion Company Limited in the Aksu prefecture in Xinjiang, approximately 20,000 former internment camp detainees are working at the factory, which appears to be one of the largest facilities in the entire Aksu prefecture.

Late October 2020  As part of their fight against the spread of COVID-19, officials at the European Parliament and the European Commission purchase thermal-imaging cameras produced by Hikvision, a Chinese firm that has been implicated in the suppression of Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang. While the United States blacklisted Hikvision in October 2019 over human rights and national security concerns, the Chinese company has yet to be sanctioned or blacklisted by the European Union.

Late October 2020  Two ethnic Kazakhs from Xinjiang who illegally crossed the border are granted temporary refugee status in Kazakhstan. Thirty-seven-year-old Malikuly entered Kazakhstan illegally in 2017 after Chinese authorities confiscated his Kazakh permanent residence permit during his visit to Xinjiang in 2015. Forty-four-year-old Aqan illegally crossed the border into Kazakhstan in May 2018 after local authorities in Xinjiang threatened to put her in an internment camp.

12 November 2020  Jailed Uyghur scholar Rahile Dawut, who disappeared from Xinjiang in December 2017 and is believed to be currently held in an internment camp, is honoured with the Courage to Think Award 2020 by New York–based rights group Scholars at Risk. The award is presented at a virtual conference and Dawut’s daughter, Akeda Pulati, accepts the award on her mother’s behalf.

15 November 2020  Bob Rae, Canada’s Ambassador to the United Nations, says he has called on the UN Human Rights Council to investigate whether China’s treatment of the Uyghurs since 2017 should be considered an act of genocide. Rae tells CBC chief political correspondent Rosemary Barton: ‘There’s no question that there’s aspects of what the Chinese are doing that fit into the definition of genocide in the genocide convention. But that then requires you to go through a process of gathering information and of making sure that we’ve got the evidence that would support that kind of an allegation.’ The Chinese Foreign Ministry dismisses Rae’s comments as ridiculous, claiming that, based on long-term population growth statistics, Canada itself better fits the description of having perpetrated genocide.
Mid-November 2020  
Volkswagen defends its decision to continue operating its car factory in Xinjiang, despite increasing international concerns about human rights abuses in the region. In an interview with the BBC, Stephen Wollenstein, Volkswagen's CEO in China, says the company ‘does not have forced labour’ in its workforce but when asked how certain he is about this claim, he adds: ‘We could never reach 100 per cent certainty.’

Late November 2020  
Two US Congressional staffers reveal that Apple lobbyists are trying to water down the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, a new law aimed at preventing forced labour in Xinjiang. The new bill would hold American companies accountable for using imprisoned or coerced Uyghur labour. Apart from Apple, several other American companies, including Nike and Coca Cola, are also reported to be opposing the bill in its current formulation.

27 November 2020  
In answering a question from CNN, Eljan Anayt, spokesperson of the Xinjiang Provincial Government, tells a press conference that some locations that have been identified as ‘concentration camps’ by Western media and institutions, especially the ASPI, are civilian institutions, such as administration buildings, nursing homes, logistics centres, or schools. This confirms the claims of numerous detainees who reported being held in administrative buildings and nursing homes that had been converted into fortified camps with locked cells.

10 December 2020  
Following years of media coverage and lobbying by the Australian Government and human rights activists, Sadam Abudusalamu, an Australian Uyghur, is reunited with his wife and son, who had been held against their will in Xinjiang since 2017.

11 December 2020  
French football star Antoine Griezmann announces he is immediately ending his sponsorship deal with Huawei following a report released by US-based surveillance research firm IPVM that shows Huawei is involved in testing facial recognition software in China that can be used by authorities to identify Uyghurs.

12 December 2020  
The Washington Post reports that Huawei has worked with at least four partner companies to develop surveillance technologies that could monitor people according to their ethnicity, including multiple AI-powered facial recognition tools that could identify members of the Uyghur community and alert Chinese authorities.
In an online statement, Alibaba, a leading Chinese technology company, says it is 'dismayed to learn' that Alibaba Cloud, its cloud computing unit, developed a facial recognition software feature that can help users to identify members of the Uyghur community in China. It says the technology feature was used for capability testing only rather than being deployed by any customer, and it does not and will not allow its technology to be used to target or identify specific ethnic groups.

The European Parliament passes the Resolution on Forced Labour and the Situation of the Uyghurs in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, which will allow the European Union to sanction Chinese officials implicated in human rights abuses in Xinjiang. The resolution also calls for expediting asylum applications from Uyghurs and other oppressed minorities in China and suspending extradition treaties with the country.

Franck Riester, France's Minister Delegate for Foreign Trade and Economic Attractiveness, says France will oppose the proposed EU–China investment agreement over concerns about the use of forced labour in Xinjiang. Riester remarks: 'We cannot facilitate investment in China if we do not commit to abolishing forced labour', adding that other European countries such as Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Germany share France's position.

During its National People's Congress, China ratifies an extradition treaty with Turkey. While the Turkish Government is yet to ratify the treaty, human rights groups are worried that, once adopted, it could endanger Uyghur families and activists who have fled to Turkey to avoid persecution by Chinese authorities. Critics of the treaty urge the Turkish Government to discard it to prevent it from 'becoming an instrument of persecution'.

British retailer Marks & Spencer signs a call to action initiated by the Coalition to End Forced Labour in the Uyghur Region (which consists of civil society organisations and trade unions) and becomes one of the first major brands to back the action to cut ties with suppliers in Xinjiang that use forced labour of Uyghurs and other ethnic Muslim minorities.

Documents discovered by the Tech Transparency Project show that Lens Technology, Apple's long-time supplier, is using forced Uyghur labour transferred from Xinjiang. While Apple says that Lens Technology has not received any transfers of forced Uyghur labour from Xinjiang, Lens Technology refuses to comment on the issue.
19 January 2021 On the last full day of the Trump administration, the US Department of State declares the Chinese Government is committing genocide and crimes against humanity by represing Uyghurs and other Muslim ethnic minorities in Xinjiang. While Anthony J. Blinken—the nominee as incoming Secretary of State—agrees with the declaration at a Senate confirmation hearing, the Chinese Embassy in the United States dismisses the genocide claims as a 'lie'.

Late January 2021 Twitter locks the account of China’s Embassy in the United States over a tweet posted earlier in the month saying that Uyghur women were no longer ‘baby-making machines’ based on a study quoted in Chinese state-owned newspaper China Daily. Twitter explains that the embassy’s tweet violated the firm’s policy against ‘dehumanisation’ and therefore has been removed from the platform.

22 February 2021 The Canadian Parliament passes a non-binding motion that declares China’s treatment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang ‘genocide’.

25 February 2021 The Dutch Parliament passes a non-binding motion that declares China’s treatment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang ‘genocide’. This is the first such declaration made by a European legislature.

Late March 2021 The European Union places sanctions on Chinese officials over human rights violations in Xinjiang. In response, China blacklists 10 European individuals (including politicians and scholars) and four entities.

Late March 2021 H&M and other foreign companies experience a backlash from Chinese consumers for expressing concern about forced labour in Xinjiang and banning cotton imports from the region. The backlash, seeded and promoted by state media and the Communist Youth League, creates new business opportunities for Chinese domestic brands, such as Li Ning and Anta, whose share prices increase.

22 April 2021 The British Parliament passes a non-binding motion declaring China’s treatment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang ‘genocide’.

12 and 13 May 2021 During a virtual meeting held by the United Nations, Western countries led by the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany, as well as human rights groups, accuse China of massive human rights abuses against Uyghurs in Xinjiang and demand unimpeded access to Xinjiang for UN experts.

Mid-May 2021 A new report by scholars at Sheffield Hallam University, entitled ‘In Broad Daylight: Uyghur Forced Labor and Global Solar Supply Chains’, shows the production in Xinjiang of key components needed for solar panels involves exploitation of Uyghurs and other peoples.
20 May 2021  The Lithuanian Parliament declares China’s treatment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang ‘genocide’ and votes to call for a UN investigation of the human rights situation in the region and to demand the European Commission review its relations with China.

4 June 2021  A series of hearings starts in London to collect evidence from about 30 witnesses on China’s treatment of Uyghurs and other peoples in Xinjiang. The four-day Uyghur Tribunal is conducted by an independent eight-member panel, chaired by prominent British barrister Sir Geoffrey Nice, and comprises academics, lawyers, and a former British diplomat. The publicly available hearings offer the most comprehensive English-language testimonies of a wide range of former detainees and camp workers to date.

21 July 2021  The Associated Press reports that some concentrated close education and training centres have been relabelled as detention centres and that some ‘trainees’ have become formal ‘prisoners’. State procurator reports show that more than 500,000 people have been formally prosecuted in the region since 2017.

10 October 2021  A report from the Associated Press confirms that state authorities have begun to wind back some aspects of the surveillance systems in urban centres in Xinjiang. Uyghur-language books begin to appear on bookstore shelves but seem to be translations from Chinese rather than texts by Uyghur authors.

Mid-November 2021  A report published by Sheffield Hallam University provides evidence that more than 100 global brands continue to buy cotton sourced in Xinjiang from second-party intermediaries. Canada seizes products made with forced labour in Xinjiang, marking the first instance of a government other than that of the United States seizing Xinjiang-produced goods. Canadian legislators introduce a bill to ban all imports from Xinjiang.

29 November 2021  The Uyghur Tribunal receives 300 pages of classified documents that had been examined and verified as authentic by The New York Times. These previously unpublished documents include classified speeches by Xi Jinping and other central party leaders concerning the Xinjiang issue as well as other internal government documents marked ‘top secret’. These documents are the clearest evidence to date of the goals of the mass internment campaign.
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