

Against Their Will: The Situation in Xinjiang

Forced Labor in Xinjiang



*Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, People's Republic of China

©Thomas Peter/Reuters
This 'vocational skills education centre', situated between regional capital Urumqi and tourist spot Turpan, is among the largest known ones, and was still undergoing extensive construction and expansion at the time the photo was taken. Dabancheng, Xinjiang, China. Sept. 4, 2018.

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New Additions to DOL's TVPRA List for Forced Labor in Xinjiang were Added this Year



Gloves



Hair Products



Textiles



Thread/Yarn



Tomato Products

The People's Republic of China has arbitrarily detained more than one million Uyghurs and other mostly Muslim minorities in China's far western Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. (1) It is estimated that 100,000 Uyghurs and other ethnic minority ex-

detainees in China may be working in conditions of forced labor following detention in re-education camps. (2) Many more rural poor workers also may experience coercion without detention. (3; 4) China has been included on the *List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor* (TVPRAList) since 2009. This year, the Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) is adding five goods produced by forced labor by Muslim minorities in China to the 2020 edition of the TVPRAList. These goods include gloves, hair products, textiles, thread/yarn, and tomato products.

The production of these goods through forced labor takes place primarily in Xinjiang. (5) While previous research has focused on goods and products produced in Xinjiang, recent external reports indicate that Uyghurs also have been transported to work in other provinces in China, increasing the number of goods potentially made with forced labor and broadening the risk of forced labor in supply chains. (5; 3) Other minorities may be forced to work under the guise of "poverty alleviation" without having been detained. (6) Moreover, the government gives subsidies to companies moving to Xinjiang or employing Muslim minority workers. (2) These practices exacerbate a demand for members of Muslim ethnic minority groups that the government wants placed in work assignments where they can be controlled and watched, as well as receive Mandarin Chinese training and undergo political indoctrination. (2) Once at a work placement, workers are usually subjected to constant surveillance and isolation. Given the vast surveillance state in Xinjiang and the threat of detention, individuals have little choice but to face the difficult situations present in these work assignments. (3)

The Department of Labor's (DOL) research utilized published victims' testimonies, and media and think tank reports, to determine the various industries implicated in this system of forced labor. Given the vast state-sponsored structure in place and the control of information, it is likely that more goods also are produced with forced labor in China. (7) In July 2020, the U.S. Departments of State, Treasury, Commerce, and Homeland Security released an advisory for businesses with potential ties to Xinjiang. This business advisory, as well as the TVPRAList and ILAB's *Comply Chain* due diligence tool for businesses, are practical guides for raising awareness and addressing this issue. Companies with supply chains that link to China, including, but not limited to, Xinjiang, should conduct due diligence to ensure that suppliers are not engaging in forced labor. With such severe and well-documented, widespread abuses, it is important that the world remains vigilant with respect to labor and goods linked to Xinjiang, including reasonable measures to guard against complicity in these violations.

Two Stories, One Goal: Repression

The People's Republic of China officially recognizes 55 ethnic groups in addition to the Han majority. Uyghurs are one of those groups. Along with other mostly Muslim minorities in China, Uyghurs confront abuse and discrimination in places like Xinjiang and elsewhere in the country.

Uyghurs detained in camps and forced to labor in factories must endure dreadful conditions. In one internment camp in Kashgar, Xinjiang, Uyghur detainees work as forced laborers to produce textiles. They receive little pay, are not allowed to leave, and have limited or no communication with family members. If family communication and visits are allowed, they are heavily monitored or cut short. When not working, the Uyghur workers must learn Mandarin and undergo ideological indoctrination. However, these abuses are not just limited to Xinjiang.

Beyond Xinjiang, in the coastal Chinese province of Fujian, Uyghur workers at a factory in Quanzhou face similar abuses. Uyghur workers are made to live in separate dormitories from Han workers. These dormitories are surrounded by an iron gate and security cameras. When finished for the day, often working more hours than their Han co-workers, the Uyghur workers are escorted back to their dormitories by provincial police officers from Xinjiang – not Fujian. The local police say the roll call is to ensure no one is missing. Uyghur workers at this factory are not allowed to exercise their free will to leave. Even if they could leave, they would not get far, as local police have confiscated their identification materials.

Sadly, these two stories fail to capture the individual struggles of the more than one million Uyghurs and other mostly Muslim minorities arbitrarily detained in the far western region of Xinjiang and across China. These two stories are just a snapshot of the vast scale of abuse and serve as a notice for the world to ask questions, take action, and demand change.

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▼ China – Gloves – Forced Labor

There are reports of glove factories forcibly training and employing 1,500 to 2,000 ethnic minority adult workers with the government's support. Victim testimonies, news media, and think tanks report that factories, including for gloves, frequently engage in coercive recruitment; limit workers' freedom of movement and communication; and subject workers to constant surveillance, retribution for religious beliefs, exclusion from community and social life, and isolation. Further, reports indicate little pay, mandatory Mandarin lessons, ideological indoctrination, and poor living conditions. In some instances, workers have been reported to be subject to torture. More broadly, according to varied estimates, at least

100,000 to hundreds of thousands of Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, and other Muslim minorities are being subjected to forced labor in China following detention in re-education camps. In addition to this, poor workers in rural areas may also experience coercion without detention. Workers are either placed at factories within the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, where the camps are located, or transferred out of Xinjiang to factories in eastern China.

1. Associated Press. *Rights Group: Lacoste Gloves Made in Chinese Internment Camp*. March 3, 2020.
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3. Center for Strategic and International Studies. *Connecting the Dots in Xinjiang: Forced Labor, Forced Assimilation, and Western Supply Chains*. October 16, 2019.
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5. SupChina. *How Companies Profit From Forced Labor in Xinjiang*. September 4, 2019.
6. U.S. Departments of State, Treasury, Commerce, and Homeland Security. *Xinjiang Supply Chain Business Advisory*. July 1, 2020.
7. VanderKlippe, Nathan. *'I Felt Like a Slave': Inside China's Complex System of Incarceration and Control of Minorities*. The Globe and Mail, March 31, 2019.
8. Zenz, Adrian. *Beyond the Camps: Beijing's Long-Term Scheme of Coercive Labor, Poverty Alleviation and Social Control in Xinjiang*. Journal of Political Risk 7, No. 12. December 2019.
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› **China – Hair Products – Forced Labor**

› **China – Textiles – Forced Labor**

› **China – Thread/Yarn – Forced Labor**

› **China – Tomato Products – Forced Labor**

› **China – Fish – Forced Labor**

› **References**

Goods Produced by Forced Labor

Country/Area	Total Number of Goods Produced by Forced Labor	Good(s)
China	17	Artificial Flowers, Bricks, Christmas Decorations, Coal, Cotton, Electronics, Fireworks, Fish*, Footwear, Garments, Gloves*†, Hair Products*†, Nails, Textiles*†, Thread/Yarn*†, Tomato Products*†, Toys
Burma	13	Bamboo, Beans (green, soy, yellow), Bricks, Jade, Palm Thatch, Rice, Rubber, Rubies, Sesame, Shrimp, Sugarcane, Sunflowers, Teak
India	8	Bricks, Carpets, Cottonseed (hybrid), Embellished Textiles, Garments, Rice, Sandstone*, Stones

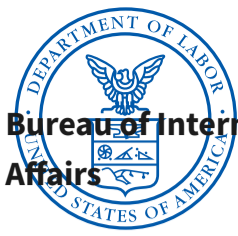
North Korea	7	Bricks, Cement, Coal, Gold, Iron, Textiles, Timber
Brazil	6	Cattle, Charcoal, Coffee*, Garments, Sugarcane, Timber
Pakistan	6	Bricks, Carpets, Coal, Cotton, Sugarcane, Wheat
Bolivia	5	Brazil Nuts/Chestnuts, Cattle, Corn, Peanuts, Sugarcane
Democratic Republic of the Congo	4	Gold, Tantalum Ore (coltan), Tin Ore (cassiterite), Tungsten Ore (wolframite)
Malaysia	4	Electronics, Garments, Oil (palm), Rubber Gloves*
Nepal	4	Bricks, Carpets, Embellished Textiles, Stones
Nigeria	3	Cocoa, Granite, Gravel (crushed stones)
Peru	3	Brazil Nuts/Chestnuts, Gold, Timber
Russia	3	Bricks, Pornography, Timber
Thailand	3	Fish, Garments, Shrimp
Burkina Faso	2	Cotton, Gold
Côte d'Ivoire	2	Cocoa, Coffee
Ghana	2	Fish, Tilapia (fish)
Indonesia	2	Fish, Oil (palm)*
Mexico	2	Chile Peppers, Tomatoes
Uzbekistan	2	Cotton, Silk Cocoons
Afghanistan	1	Bricks
Angola	1	Diamonds
Argentina	1	Garments
Bangladesh	1	Dried Fish

Benin	1	Cotton
Cambodia	1	Bricks*
Colombia	1	Coca (stimulant plant)
Dominican Republic	1	Sugarcane
Ethiopia	1	Textiles (hand-woven)
Kazakhstan	1	Cotton
Malawi	1	Tobacco
Mali	1	Rice
Niger	1	Cattle
Paraguay	1	Cattle
Sierra Leone	1	Diamonds
South Sudan	1	Cattle
Taiwan	1	Fish*
Tajikistan	1	Cotton
Turkmenistan	1	Cotton
Venezuela	1	Gold*
Vietnam	1	Garments

*=Additions to the List in 2020

†=Goods from China produced by forced labor by Muslim minorities, including Uyghurs

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