



Declaration for Uighur Muslims

Why in News

Recently, 43 countries have signed a declaration, calling on China to ensure full respect for the rule of law for the **Muslim Uighur community in Xinjiang**.

- Earlier, in March 2021 several hundred [Uighur Muslim women in Turkey staged an International Women's Day march](#) against the extradition agreement of Turkey with China.

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Key Points

▪ About the Declaration:

- The declaration was signed by the US and other countries accusing China of **human rights violations and ethnic cleansing** against the Uighur Muslims.
 - Similar **declarations** in 2019 and 2020 condemned China for its policies in Xinjiang, where United States has accused Beijing of carrying out genocide.
- It also called for access to Xinjiang for independent observers, including the [UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#).
- It noted the existence of a large network of **'political re-education'** camps in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, where over a million people have been arbitrarily detained.

▪ China's Stand:

- China has long **denied accusations of ethnic cleansing**. It also denounced the declaration and termed it as a plot to hurt China's image.
- China claims its camps to be 'educational centres' where the Uighurs are being cured of "**extremist thoughts**" and radicalisation, and learning vocational skills.
 - However, in actuality, they are **brutal incarceration camps**.

▪ India's Stand:

- The Indian government has **maintained near silence on the Uighur crisis**.

Uighur Muslims

▪ About:

- The Uighurs are a predominantly **Muslim minority Turkic ethnic group**, whose origins can be traced to Central and East Asia.
 - The Uighurs speak their own language, similar to Turkish, and see themselves as culturally and ethnically close to Central Asian nations.
- The Uighurs are considered to be one of the **55 officially recognized ethnic minority communities in China**.
 - However, China recognises the community only as a regional minority and rejects that they are an indigenous group.
- Currently, the **largest population of the Uighur ethnic community** lives in the Xinjiang region of China.
 - A significant population of Uighurs also lives in the neighbouring Central Asian countries such as **Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan**.
 - **Xinjiang** is technically an autonomous region within China — its largest region, rich in minerals, and **sharing borders with eight countries**, including India, Pakistan, Russia and Afghanistan.

▪ Persecution of Uighurs:

- Over the past few decades, as economic prosperity has come to Xinjiang, it has brought with it in large numbers the **majority Han Chinese**.
 - They have cornered the better jobs, and left the Uighurs feeling their livelihoods and identity were under threat.
 - This led to **sporadic violence, in 2009** culminating in a riot that killed 200 people, mostly Han Chinese, in the region's capital Urumqi.
- Uighur Muslims for decades have suffered from abuses including persecution, forced detention, intense scrutiny, surveillance and even slavery.
- China claims that Uighur groups want to establish an independent state and, because of the Uighurs' cultural ties to their neighbours, leaders fear that elements in places like **Pakistan may back a separatist movement in Xinjiang**.

Way Forward

- China **must close its "Vocational Training Centers,"** release the religious and political prisoners from prisons and detention camps.
- It **should adopt multiculturalism** and accept the Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims of China as ordinary citizens equal to native Chinese.
- All the **countries should reconsider their position and urge China to immediately stop the persecution of Muslims** and the **prohibition of Islam in Xinjiang**.

[Source: TH](#)

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