



Uighur Muslims

Why in News

Recently, several hundred [Uighur Muslim](#) women in Turkey staged an [International Women's Day](#) march against the extradition agreement of Turkey with China and demanding the closure of **mass incarceration camps in China's Xinjiang Province**.

- Earlier in 2020, the [United States House of Representatives approved a legislation](#) calling for sanctions on Chinese officials responsible for oppression of Uighur Muslims.



Key Points

- **Uighur Muslims:**
 - 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 **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**, who 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, under the **false accusation by the Chinese government of terrorism and separatism**, have suffered from abuses including **persecution, forced detention, intense scrutiny, surveillance and even slavery.**
 - However, **China claims its camps to be 'educational centres'** where the Uighurs are being cured of "extremist thoughts" and radicalisation, and learning vocational skills.
 - 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.**
- **China's Extradition Treaty:**
 - In December 2020, **China approved an extradition treaty with Turkey** aimed at strengthened judicial cooperation to facilitate a crackdown on transnational criminals including terrorists.
 - Extradition is the formal process of one state surrendering an individual to another state for prosecution or punishment for crimes committed in the requesting country's jurisdiction.
 - The extradition agreement comes amidst **deepening economic and financial ties between Turkey and China.**
 - China is also Turkey's leading supplier of [Covid-19](#) vaccines.
 - Since 1990, the **Uighur** diaspora in Turkey has become more vibrant and has attracted widespread attention globally through demonstrations, conferences, meetings and briefings.
 - **Concerns of Uighur Muslims:**
 - **If Turkey ratifies the treaty**, this will be the **last nail in the coffin of Uighur culture** as China will silence the biggest Uighur diaspora outside Xinjiang.
 - The treaty will become another **instrument in the hands of China for the prosecution of its enslaved Uighur minority.**
- **India's Stand:**
 - The Indian government has maintained near silence on the **Uighur** crisis.

Way Forward

- All the countries should reconsider their position and **urge China to immediately stop the persecution of Muslims and the prohibition of Islam in Xinjiang.**
- 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.

Source:IE

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