



## Uyghur Forced Labor

**For Prelims:** [Uyghur Forced Labour Prevention Act \(UFLPA\)](#), **Uyghurs**, [Uyghur Autonomous Region](#), [Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection \(CBP\)](#), [European Union \(EU\)](#), [World Trade Organization \(WTO\)](#), [International Labour Organization \(ILO\)](#)

**For Mains:** Human Right Violation and its impact on Society.

**Source:** TH

### Why in News?

Recently, A German vehicle brand (Volkswagen (VW)) based in China has been seized in the US due to [Uyghur Forced Labour Prevention Act \(UFLPA\)](#) violations.

- Allegations have been made against several notable companies from the **US** and **European Union** including **Apple** and **Zara (Spain)** regarding their involvement in forced labour in Xinjiang province of China.
- The **U.S. State Department** and **UN Human Rights Commissioner's** reports highlight **Uyghur repression** as **genocide** and **potential crimes** against humanity.



## Who are Uyghurs?

### ▪ About:

- The Uyghurs are a predominantly **Muslim minority Turkic ethnic group**, whose origins can be traced to **Central and East Asia**.
  - The Uyghurs speak their own language, similar to Turkish, and see themselves as culturally and ethnically closer to Central Asian nations than **Han ethnic Chinese**.
- The Uyghurs are considered to be one of the **55 officially recognized ethnic minority communities in China**.
  - However, China recognizes the community only as a regional minority and **rejects that they are an indigenous group**.
- Currently, the **largest population of the Uyghur ethnic community** lives in the **Xinjiang region** of China.
  - A significant population of Uyghurs 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 (Union Territory of Ladakh)**, Pakistan, Russia and Afghanistan.

### ▪ China's Move Against Human Rights of Uyghurs:

- **UN Report:** A report by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) concluded that **"serious human rights violations" against the Uyghur** and other predominantly Muslim communities have occurred in Xinjiang.
  - These violations include allegations of torture, ill-treatment, forced medical treatment, and sexual and gender-based violence.
- **Arbitrary Detentions:** The extent of arbitrary detentions against Uyghurs and others, coupled with **restrictions on fundamental rights**, may constitute crimes against humanity.
  - The Chinese government's counter-extremism strategy involves the use of so-called **Vocational Educational and Training Centers (VETCs) or re-education camps**.
- **Interlocking Patterns of Restrictions:** China's policies in Xinjiang have led to severe and undue restrictions on a wide range of human rights. Even if the VETC system has been reduced, the **underlying laws and policies remain**, resulting in increased imprisonment and abuse since 2017.
- **Discrimination:** The violations occur against the backdrop of broader discrimination targeting Uyghurs and other minorities.
  - The Chinese government's assertion of targeting terrorists through its counter-extremism measures has raised serious concerns.
- **International Condemnation:** Fifty-one UN member countries issued a joint declaration **condemning China's crimes against humanity committed against Uyghurs** and other communities.

### ▪ China's Response to the Allegations of Uyghurs' Human Rights Violation:

- Beijing either **denied the existence of the internment camps** or dismissed such claims as outright falsehoods.
- The government has **described them as vocational training centres** aimed at providing employment opportunities and addressing religious and separatist extremism among the Uyghur Muslim population.
- In reaction to the **global allegations, the Chinese government has relocated detainees** to different regions within the country and redirected exports away from Xinjiang.

## How are Different Nations Addressing Human Rights Violations Against the Uyghurs?

### ▪ United States:

- The **Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA)**, directs the **Forced Labor Enforcement Task Force** to develop a strategy for supporting the enforcement of the

prohibition on the importation of goods into the **United States** manufactured wholly or in part with **forced labour** in the **People's Republic of China**, especially from the **Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region**.

- The law creates a presumption that importing goods from China, or made by certain entities in this region, is banned under **Section 307** of the **Tariff Act of 1930**.
  - Such goods, wares, articles, and merchandise are not entitled to entry to the **United States**.
  - The presumption applies unless the **Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)** determines, through clear and convincing evidence, that the goods, wares, articles, or merchandise were not produced using forced labour.
  - The Act seeks to **penalize domestic companies for human rights abuses**, such as torture, arbitrary detentions, and forced labour, affecting approximately one million Uyghur Muslims who have been held in the **internment camps** in the China's north-western region.
- The law seeks to utilise the definition of forced labour provided by the **International Labour Organization (ILO)** and focus on large corporations.
- **European Union:**
  - In contrast to the **U.S. ban**, which primarily targets imports from Xinjiang, the **European Union (EU)** has put forward a broader law that addresses all products dependent on **forced labour**, including those manufactured within the 27-member bloc.
  - There is worry that bans targeting specific countries could be seen as discriminatory actions according to the regulations of the **World Trade Organization (WTO)**.
  - **EU-wide Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive**, addressing social, environmental, and human rights abuses in supply chains, has been at a standstill since 2022.

## International Labour Organization

- **About:**
  - **International Labour Organization (ILO)** is the only tripartite **U.N. agency**, since **1919**. It brings together **governments, employers and workers of 187 member States**, to set labour **standards, develop policies** and devise programmes promoting decent work for all women and men.
  - **Established:**
    - **1919**, by the **Treaty of Versailles** as an affiliated agency of the League of Nations.
    - Became the **first affiliated** specialized agency of the **United Nations** in **1946**.
  - **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland
  - **Founding Mission:** Social justice is essential to universal and lasting peace.
    - Promotes internationally recognized human and labour rights.
  - **Nobel Peace Prize:**
    - Received in 1969.
    - For improving peace among classes
    - Pursuing decent work and justice for workers
    - Providing technical assistance to other developing nations

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

**Q. Consider the following pairs: (2016)**

**Community sometimes in the affairs of mentioned in the news**

1. Kurd — Bangladesh
2. Madhesi — Nepal
3. Rohingya — Myanmar

**Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?**

- (a)** 1 and 2
- (b)** 2 only
- (c)** 2 and 3
- (d)** 3 only

**Ans: (c)**

- **Kurd:** They are one of the indigenous peoples of the Mesopotamian plains and the highlands in what are now South-eastern Turkey, North-eastern Syria, northern Iraq, North-western Iran and South-western Armenia. They also adhere to a number of different religions and creeds, although the majority is Sunni Muslims. **Hence, pair 1 is not correctly matched.**
- **Madhesi:** It is an ethnic group living mainly in the southern plains of Nepal, close to the border with India. Madhesis are predominantly Hindus with some Muslims and Christians. **Hence, pair 2 is correctly matched.**
- **Rohingya:** They are an ethnic group, largely comprising Muslims, who predominantly live in the Western Myanmar province of Rakhine. They speak a dialect of Bengali, as opposed to the commonly spoken Burmese language. According to Myanmar authorities, they are not the authorised citizens of the country. **Hence, pair 3 is correctly matched.**

**Therefore, option (c) is the correct answer.**

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