



**2014 Report on
Human Rights Violations
in East Turkestan**

World Uyghur Congress

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The World Uyghur Congress (WUC) is an international organization that represents the collective interests of the Uyghur people in both East Turkestan and abroad. The principle objective of the WUC is to promote democracy, human rights and freedom for the Uyghur people and use peaceful, nonviolent and democratic means to determine their future. Acting as the sole legitimate organization of the Uyghur people in both East Turkestan and abroad, WUC endeavors to set out a course for the peaceful settlement of the East Turkestan Question through dialogue and negotiation.

The WUC supports a nonviolent and peaceful opposition movement against the Chinese Communist regime in East Turkestan and an unconditional adherence to internationally recognized human rights standards as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It adheres to the principles of democratic pluralism and rejects totalitarianism, religious intolerance and terrorism as an instrument of policy.

For more information, please visit our website: www.uyghurcongress.org

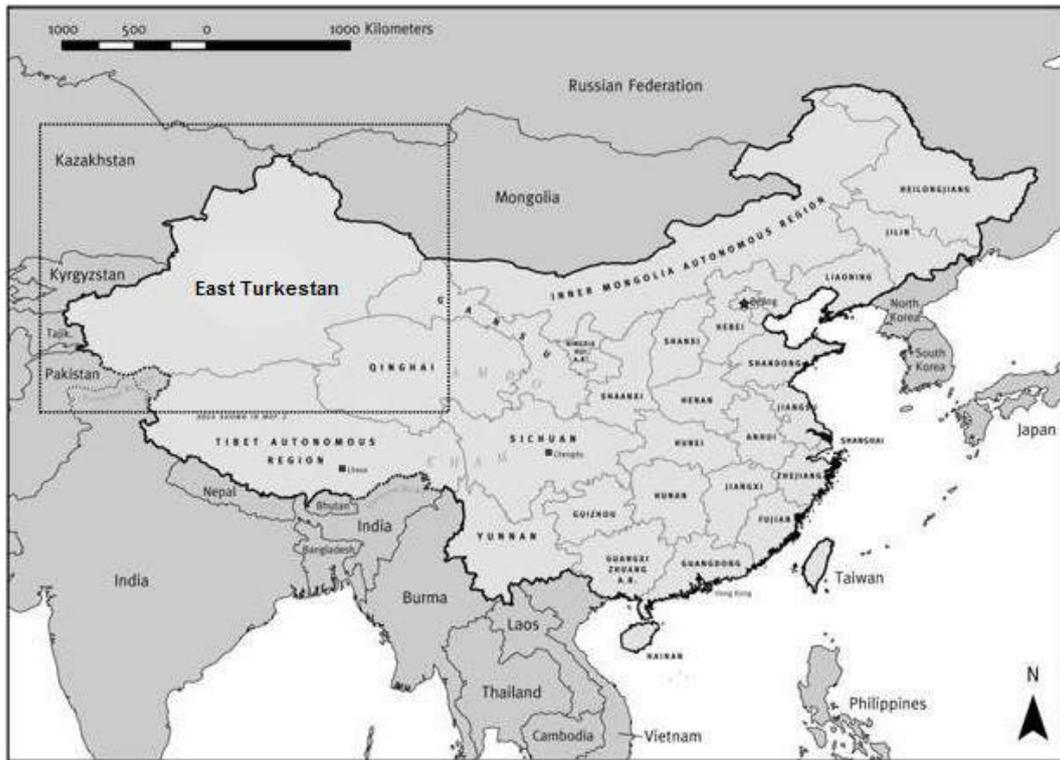


2014 Report on Violence & Detentions in East Turkestan

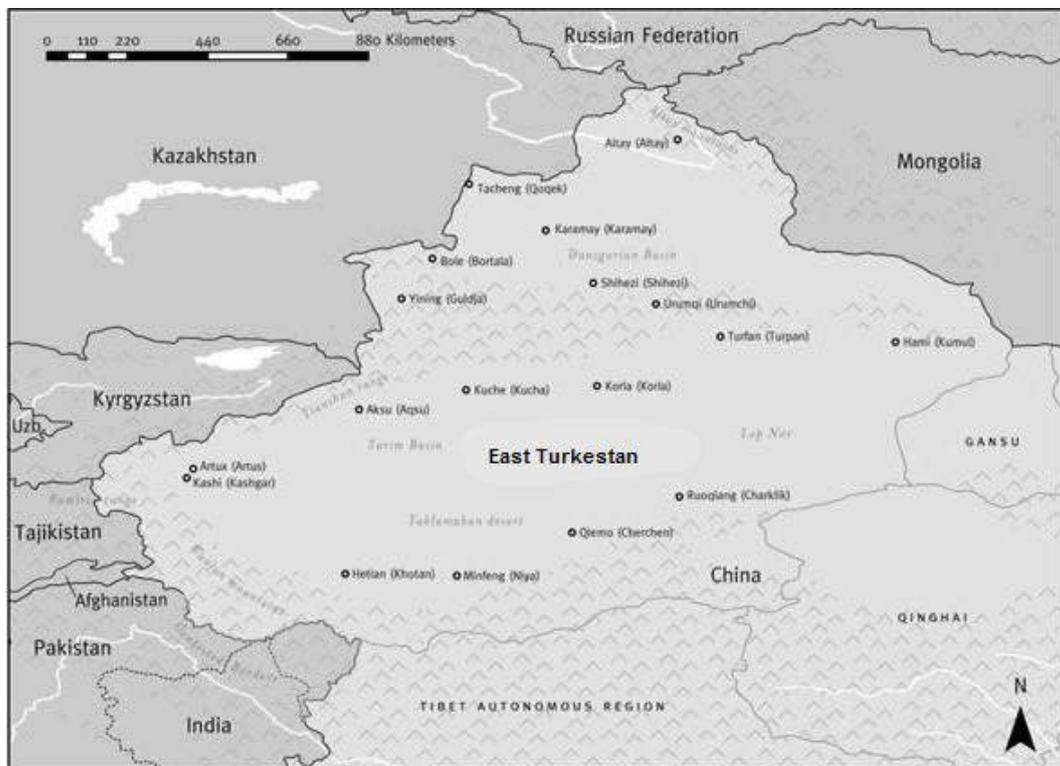
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I. MAP OF CHINA AND EAST TURKESTAN:



Map 1: Provinces and Autonomous Regions of the People's Republic of China © John Emerson



Map 2: East Turkestan and Surrounding Area, including Eight Border Countries © John Emerson

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The lead-up to 2014 was nothing short of turbulent in East Turkestan (also known as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region – XUAR) with increased violence towards the end of 2013 spilling over into the new year. We have witnessed a dramatic increase in the use of violence in the peripheral region, home to over twenty million Uyghurs¹, as well as a rising population of Chinese.

Detentions have been on the rise, with hundreds arrested since the introduction of China's newest one-year anti-terror campaign initiated back in May in response to a deadly incident in Urumqi that left 43 dead. China's Chief Prosecutor of the Xinjiang People's Procuratorate, at the 12th annual Xinjiang regional People's Congress session, proudly boasted that arrests in East Turkestan doubled as compared to 2013, as a direct result of its new counter-terror campaign. He stated that 27,164 "terror suspects" were arrested in the region in 2014, despite providing no substantive information about the nature of the arrests.

The widening definition of terrorism and its related activities has become a greater concern and has opened the door for the regime to jail whom it pleases on a whim. The international community has spoken out against these practices and these concerns have been well-met by the UN Security Council in Resolution 1456 which details that counter-terrorism operations must strictly follow internationally recognized human rights norms. There has been little or no indication that the Chinese government has remained respectful of these principles, instead relying on its own obstinacy as a guide.

One of the deadliest incidents in recent memory took place in Yarkand County in late July. Initial reporting by state media suggested that just dozens of civilians had been killed in the clash, but later updated its count by later confirming that ninety-six had in fact been killed and another 215 arrested. Although the attack took place on Monday, July 28, state media took nearly a day to release any official reports of the incident. Uyghur sources, however, provide strong indications that the death toll was likely much higher, as a source from the region suggested that over two thousand Uyghurs may have been killed during and in the aftermath of the incident. The usual restrictions on reporting prevented an independent inquiry into the incident and questions remain.

The surprising arrest and subsequent sentencing of Uyghur scholar, Ilham Tohti, to life in prison, has also drawn the ire of the international community. His arrest and trial served as an apt illustration of the explicit biases of China's justice system as well as a harbinger of the direction that the state is choosing to follow with regards to dissent. Although his case was monitored by the international community, many others are not. Uyghurs are frequently arrested and held on dubious charges for long periods of time with no access to legal representation. The central government continues to rebuff internationally recognized legal standards, particularly in cases involving Uyghurs in East Turkestan.

Dissent grew in other parts of the country as democracy activists ramped up their protests in Hong Kong in relation to China's refusal to agree to a free and fair electoral system – something promised to the people of Hong Kong back in 1984 in cooperation with the British government – news of which has of course been blocked throughout mainland China. Protestors have been determined and resolute in the face of pressure from Beijing and have remained mostly peaceful. The international community has been closely monitoring events there and foreign journalists have been relatively free to report the demonstrations, though China's increasingly active policy of internet and media censorship has ballooned throughout the year domestically.

¹ Although Chinese census numbers put the official Uyghur population at 10.2 million

The events that have unfolded in Hong Kong must also be seen within the context of China's general hostility towards those that wish to influence government policy. The same can be seen in Tibet and Inner Mongolia, as well as towards those that push for a more representative system.

Nicholas Bequelin of Human Rights Watch argued that what we are witnessing is, "one of the harshest crackdowns on critics and rights activists...in years". What we have seen is a paranoid government that is having trouble maintaining its firm control over those within its territory. This report aims to address widespread violence in the country, namely involving Uyghurs, and looks to offer some of the more likely avenues for a de-escalation of the conflict going forward.

STRIKE HARD CAMPAIGN

China announced its most recent anti-terror campaign at the end of May 2014, and with it came a noticeable increase in arrests and a swell in violence in the region. According to Xinhua news agency, in the first month of the campaign, 32 gangs were shut down and over 380 "terror suspects" were arrested, despite a dearth of information regarding the details of those arrests or whether any genuine laws were actually transgressed.

This new effort has also included the campaign simultaneously being waged in Tibet against dissidents and the civilian population alike. The state has even reportedly attached the charge of "intentional homicide" to those that aid others who choose to self-immolate in protest.

The new campaign has provided the Chinese government with the necessary cover for implementing harsh security measures and tightening its control over the activity of all Uyghurs – under the guise of "combatting terrorism" no less. The campaign has only intensified since it was introduced with countless Uyghurs having been arrested. At the beginning of December, 22 Uyghur imams and religious leaders were sentenced to between 5 and 16 years in prison for "preaching illegally" – another clear example of the most recent curbs on religious and cultural rights that Uyghurs continue to face.

This campaign harkens back to similar "strike hard" campaigns initiated in the 1990's that have had both similar aims, and more importantly, strikingly similar results. This approach has proven that state violence as a response to actions of a tiny minority can only exacerbate tensions. Violence and intolerance begets further violence and intolerance. Accordingly, the most effective way to work towards stabilising the region and repairing relationships is a program that hinges on equality, non-discrimination and cooperation.



*Chinese security forces move around the city of Urumqi on May 23, 2014, following the announcement of the Strike Hard Campaign
(Photo Courtesy RFA)*

DEATH SENTENCES

The use of the death sentence has been of particular severity all over China. Uyghurs facing charges relating to terrorism have not been spared this punishment.

Most troubling has been the absence of transparency or proper observance of internationally recognized legal procedures. The most recent death sentences doled out in 2014 have shown that the majority, if not all, of these decisions are implemented hastily with no effective chance for appeal. None of these sentences have been delivered transparently or with any opportunity for external scrutiny by third parties. There has been no evidence that the suspects were provided any kind of legal representation or defense.

Amnesty International has called the death sentence “the ultimate denial of human rights”² and reminded us that its use is in clear violation of the right to life under the Universal Declaration. The WUC reminds the international community that China has consistently been in clear violation of a number of internationally recognized human rights norms and continues to disregard the essential principles of freedom of speech and assembly as well as the right of legal due process.

China remains the world leader in the use of the death penalty, executing more people than any country last year combined. Executions rose from 682 in 2012 to 778 in 2013, according to Amnesty International, suggesting that China continues to move against the overwhelming trend away from its practice. Although Amnesty’s estimates are based on factual information taken from inside the country, many have suggested that the real figure is likely much higher.



A truck-load of Uyghurs are unloaded during a mass-sentencing that took place on May 27, 2014, in Yili, East Turkestan.

China also maintained a 99.93 percent conviction rate of those put on trial in 2013, suggesting that for those convicted, the chance to fairly plead one’s case in court remains incredibly limited. Tight restrictions are placed on access to information regarding these cases with no clear appeals process available to the defendants. Although deaths sentences have actually been declining in China as a whole since 2005, executions stemming from “terror-related” incidents continues to rise, particularly in East Turkestan.

Although there has been some talk of China moving away from its use (China recently scrapped 9 out of the 55 offences that are punishable by death), but there remains little evidence that they are moving towards a legal system that will see the death penalty as ineffectual. To the contrary, the state

² <http://www.amnesty.org/en/death-penalty/myths-facts/facts>

has been making use of ever more expansive definitions of crimes such as terrorism, separatism and religious extremism to cover that which would merely be considered moderate dissent elsewhere.

As has been seen over the past six months, it has become increasingly common for the Chinese government to sentence Uyghurs without the proper observance of legal procedures. The most recent death sentences doled out in 2014 have shown that the majority, if not all, of these decisions are implemented quickly by Chinese authorities. What this approach likely signals is that the government is looking to set a precedent by which no Uyghur dissent is tolerated.

REFUGEES

It is of little surprise that there has been a significant increase in Uyghurs fleeing East Turkestan. China's policies have only intensified as a response to the upsurge in violence as their consistent reaction to unrest has been to clamp down even harder, as though suppression hasn't gone far enough to deter this sentiment. Without identifying the root cause of this discontent, the state's policies have only served to perpetuate the conflict and intensify tensions. The subsequent exile leaves us with a different scenario to cope with, namely, the fate of hundreds of Uyghur refugees with no place to call home.



Uyghur refugees held in a Thai detention centre, many of whom falling ill without adequate medical care. (Photo courtesy RFA).

Apart from the drastically increased number of arrested and sentenced Uyghurs in the past years, Uyghurs fleeing repression in East Turkestan are in extreme risk of being deported back to China. Uyghur refugees and asylum seekers have been forcibly deported – in flagrant violation of both national deportation procedures and international law – from countries with strong trade and diplomatic ties to China. Upon their return to China, many have been detained, tortured, sentenced to death or disappeared.

The non-refoulement principle, spelled out in the 1951 Refugee Convention requires that states do not allow for the forcible return of refugees or asylum-seekers to territories where their “life or freedom would be threatened on account of race, religion, nationality, member of a particular social group, or political opinion”³. The current circumstances involving refugees and asylum seekers in detention in Thailand and Malaysia may prove to be a test of this principle. Thai and Malaysian authorities are legally obligated not to return these refugees to China because of the imminent threat that they may be subjected to harsh treatment. They must be granted the opportunity to take their cases to the UNHCR to be reviewed quickly and fairly.

There has also been a historically concerted effort on the part of the Chinese to consistently attempt to link the Uyghur people, as a collective, to terror networks as a means to delegitimize their genuine grievances. By reducing the entire Uyghur population to a vague and unfounded label, not only do they entirely misrepresent their cause, but they deny any potential variation within the views of the community. If the four men are subsequently extradited to China, it will only illustrate capitulation

³ *UN Refugee Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, Article 23(1).*

and the unwillingness of the international community to stand up for truth and justice in international affairs.

On November 26, 2014, at a UN meeting in New York, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu announced that Turkey had taken the necessary steps to receive the refugees from Thailand, though there has been no definite action taken by either party while China continues to pressure both countries.

ILHAM TOHTI AND HIS STUDENTS

Ilham Tohti is an ethnically Uyghur economist, writer, intellectual and a professor at Minzu University in Beijing, China. He is one of the most prominent scholars on Uyghur issues and was the founder of the website *Uyghur Online* – a platform launched to promote conciliation between Uyghurs and Chinese. Tohti was detained by the Chinese government back on January 15, 2014, on initial charges of “inciting separatism”, tried from September 23-24 in Urumqi, convicted of “inciting separatism” and sentenced to life in prison.

Chinese authorities appeared even more determined to silence resistance of any kind. Notwithstanding Tohti’s clear message of peace and reconciliation between Chinese and Uyghur citizens, it was evident that an example was to be made of him over the subsequent months. His eventual sentencing to life in prison, following months of questionable conduct on the part of the authorities, was undeniably politically motivated and acts as an indication of the nature of future trials.

The entire ordeal involving Mr. Tohti has been marred by irregularities and the outright perversion of any fair legal process. Beginning with his questionable arrest in January, denial of family visits or access to legal counsel, denial of adequate food and water, and the total disregard for internationally accepted legal rights, the case is a textbook example of how a corrupt legal system is able to bend and distort due process for state purposes. Mr. Tohti was unable to meet with his lawyer for six months following his arrest with one of his lawyers having been forced to quit the case following political pressure.

The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD), in an opinion adopted between April 22 and May 1, found that, “The deprivation of Mr. Tohti is arbitrary, being in contravention of articles 9, 10, 11, 18, 19, 20 and 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights” and urged the government to “take the necessary steps to remedy the situation, which include the immediate release of Mr. Tohti and to grant him compensation for the harm he has suffered during the period of his arbitrary detention”⁴.



Ilham Tohti lectures a group of students at Minzu University, Beijing. Seven of his students were detained & imprisoned for alleged separatist activities. (Photo courtesy RFA).

Mr. Tohti’s case has been of great significance and has been given a great deal of attention because of his profile and status in China, but trials like these are carried out regularly with ordinary citizens ostensibly punished for crimes that would otherwise amount to little more than moderate dissent elsewhere. This case sends strong signals to the rest of the Uyghur population. Not only will Uyghurs be even more hesitant to criticize or stand up to the state, but it will self-servingly provide China with a yardstick by which all other cases will be judged. It has been clear that such a

⁴ <http://docs.uyghuramerican.org/Letter-to-the-Source-Opinion-No.-03-2014-China.pdf>

chilling effect has been the aim of the state throughout the trial.

The international community was outspoken about the case prior to and following the sentence. Following his trial in September, President Obama personally urged China to release Professor Tohti. Both the US and UK foreign ministries as well as the European Union also weighed in on the decision. A spokesperson from the UK's foreign office stated that, "Without any transparency, it is hard to have confidence that proper judicial standards were upheld", which was echoed in a statement made by US Secretary of State, John Kerry, stating that "this appears to be retribution for Professor Tohti's peaceful efforts to promote human rights for China's ethnic Uyghur citizens".

The Pen American Center, in a statement, wrote that, "[Ilham Tohti's] conviction makes a mockery of China's professed commitment to social harmony by silencing one of the country's unifying voices, with it, fellow Uighur writers who are now unlikely to dare speak out".

What is more, seven of Tohti's students, who had been held indeterminately, were sentenced to up to eight years in prison simply for their association with Tohti – a blatant illustration of how far the regime will go to punish dissent. Three of these students include Perhat Halmurat, Shohret Tursun and Abdukeyum Ablimit as well as four others.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Along with human rights defenders and advocates for political reform, there remains a substantial number of Chinese citizens that suffer routine discrimination at the hands of the state. Along with many Uyghurs, tens of thousands of other activists, petitioners, Falun Gong practitioners, Christians and Tibetans are believed to be in detention purely for their political or religious views.

Authorities substantially intensified their curbs on Islam among the Uyghur population in particular in 2014, making hundreds of arrests, heavily monitoring religious leaders and conducting routine house-to-house searches. Religious extremism is among the PRC's "three evil forces" that ostensibly plague the country. Such a designation has provided Beijing with the power to fastidiously regulate imams and other religious leaders to ensure that what they are teaching is acceptable to the central government.

China's new legislation targeting religious extremism, introduced in November and put into effect in January, 2015, serves to further limit the exercise of religious practice among Uyghurs⁵. As per the new restrictions, children under the age of 18 remain barred from attending religious services or even from entering mosques to pray. Likewise, public service employees remain barred from religious practice during working hours and were most recently prohibited from



Chinese security forces surround the Id Kah Mosque in Kashgar to prevent Uyghur Muslims from entering during Ramadan, July, 2014. (Photo courtesy Al Jazeera).

⁵ <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/religious-extremism-law-12102014160359.html>

fasting during the holy month of Ramadan in July. The wearing of traditional headscarves and other religious dress as well as men donning beards has also been restricted.

Imams and other religious leaders require vetting by state officials to ensure that they are strictly teaching within the bounds of what the government tolerates. Ever-more intrusive controls have been adopted, including surveillance inside mosques and the thorough screening of materials produced by religious leaders. The imam of China's largest mosque in Kashgar was killed in July, reportedly for acting as an apologist for the government, illustrating the pressures of adhering to government mandate as well as the danger of supporting one side or the other. These events have chilled the overt practice of religion, relegating many Uyghurs into their own homes to practice.

Chinese officials also announced, on December 26, that they intend to publish an exhaustive list of approved places of worship as a means to "root out" illegal religious activities. The new controls will effectively bar communal prayer and likely other religious activities from all but these designated locations.

Central government officials frequently speak of disseminating the "correct" view of what it means to be Chinese, eschewing any cultural particularities or difference. Though Chinese law officially prohibits discrimination based on nationality, ethnicity, race, gender or religion⁶, de facto discrimination is still pervasive.

CULTURAL AND EDUCATION RIGHTS:

Chinese officials have recently stepped up a campaign aimed at rewarding interethnic couples. Financial incentives have been offered to the tune of 10,000 yuan/year as a means to encourage intermarriage between Chinese and Uyghur and other minority populations within China. Mixed race couples will also be granted privileged access to housing, medical treatment and education for their children.

This recent policy signals a move away from the historic "separate but equal" approach to ethnic groups, with greater focus on integration. There has, however, been strong suggestions that such a policy is meant to undermine Uyghur culture in an attempt to further assimilate those that do not conform to the Chinese culture and language. Mass migration of Chinese over the past decades into East Turkestan has exacerbated tensions between the two groups, as discrimination and significant inequality remains widespread between the two groups.

Language rights have also become increasingly contentious as more and more Chinese citizens flood into the region. The right to operate Uyghur language schools has been largely supplanted by the exclusive study of Mandarin in some cases. Employment opportunities in cities have dwindled for those without knowledge of Mandarin, further excluding large swaths of the Uyghur community who have limited working knowledge of the language.

James Millward, professor of Intersocietal History at Georgetown University (and researcher on Central Asian and China) argues that "Whereas old rhetoric and policies stressed distinctiveness between different groups in China, then, the new language encourages or suggests erasure of those distinctions." Much of the evidence that we have gathered out of the region supports this suggestion.

⁶ *Constitution of the People's Republic of China, Chapter II, Article 36.*

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

Freedom of movement for Uyghurs living in East Turkestan has also developed into a more serious issue in 2014. Strict checkpoints and roadblocks have been set up throughout the region as a means to monitor the whereabouts of Uyghurs living there. ID cards are required to move from place to place as well as an additional green card required to purchase train or bus tickets, and to make hotel reservations.

A more recent phenomenon has been the rigorous inspection of the contents of smartphones held by Uyghurs at checkpoints. The contents of their phones are examined thoroughly for signs of questionable activity – a standard that remains remarkably low when considering China's new counter-terror legislation. Any content that merely hints at separatism or sanctioned religious activity can have the user arrested on terrorism charges.



Police stop vehicles at a checkpoint near Lukqun, East Turkestan. (Photo courtesy Reuters).

Meticulous surveillance has also been documented, particularly Uyghurs' communication to outside sources. Phone calls made to international lines are heavily monitored along with email communication. These practices effectively ensure that little to no reliable information comes out of the region from primary sources regarding ongoing conditions there. The internet is regularly shut down following unrest to prevent outside actors from seeing in.

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY RESPONSE

The international community has been mildly vocal about concerns in East Turkestan for Uyghurs. Following the sentencing of Ilham Tohti, a number of states voiced their concern and urged China to rethink its approach to dissent. The United States, the UK, Canada, Germany, Australia and Italy, among others, have all made press statements or statements at the UN Human Rights Council in condemnation of these events.

There has, however, been regular silence on issues concerning Uyghur rights. One of the problems faced by Uyghur rights activists when dealing with the international community is that widespread publicity concerning these aforementioned issues is typically coloured by the media response to violence. The average person, unless scouring for information, will only come across those stories that emerge when there have been terrorist attacks in the region. Whether the attacks can be regarded objectively as terrorism is another matter altogether because impressions of the situation are often made regardless of proper context.

There has typically been a more resounding push for the rights of Tibetans whom also face their own unique challenges in relation to China. There has, however, been a definite disproportionate response from the world community regarding both issues. Although the Tibetan people number less than half of Uyghurs living in China, it is the former that have historically been covered more extensively.

Uyghurs and human rights activists are then uniquely challenged as a consequence of these factors. The frame of terrorism is a difficult one to escape, regardless of those that participate in violence.

Persistent generalizations lead to bigotry and obscure an accurate and objective picture of the reality for all Uyghur people.

III. FATAL INCIDENTS

The following is a detailed list of deadly incidents involving Uyghurs and Chinese police and security forces. From single incidents involving one or two deaths to violence on a much larger scale with casualties reported in the hundreds, violence in East Turkestan no doubt intensified in 2014.

JANUARY 15

Three Uyghur were shot dead in an attack on a police station in the town of Yengieriq, Aksu prefecture, leaving two officers injured, during a fight with guards who prevented them from entering the building⁷. Chinese media quickly called the incident an act of terrorism and separatism⁸.

Radio Free Asia (RFA) reported that the men sought a meeting with the police chief, but were denied the opportunity. Authorities from the nearby town of Dolan said that the incident was being investigated by national security authorities⁹.

The week prior saw the announcement of a doubling in East Turkestan's public security budget in response to the increase in violence towards the end of 2013.

JANUARY 22

A Uyghur official, Jume Tohtiniyaz, working for the Communist party for Ghaldir village in Aksu prefecture's Karatal Township, was killed by "separatists" in response to his support for strict, pro-government policies. According to RFA, Tohtiniyaz was a strict enforcer of the state's religious and security policies¹⁰. Two suspects were subsequently arrested and during interrogation, were reported to have confessed that they had killed the official because he had participated in the jailing of friends in the region.

JANUARY 23

Eleven Uyghurs were killed shortly after crossing into neighboring Kyrgyzstan¹¹, ostensibly refugees fleeing state repression. Nine were gunned down by Kyrgyz border guards while another two were killed by a local hunter shortly prior. The hunter was allegedly killed by the Uyghur group and his weapon taken.

Concerns immediately arouse in relation to the narrative supplied by Kyrgyz authorities, who argued that they appeared to be a militant group or Uyghur separatists¹². The Chinese echoed a similar statement. A Kyrgyz border guard also suggested that it could have been an attempt "to seize weapons from local herders and hunters to commit acts of terror here and then return to their native county"¹³,

⁷ <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/24/world/asia/3-dead-in-clash-at-police-station-in-western-china-report-says.html>

⁸ Pokalova, E. (2012). Authoritarian regimes against terrorism: lessons from China. *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 6(2), 285.

⁹ <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/attack-01222014184920.html>

¹⁰ <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/deaths-02032014174649.html>

¹¹ <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/kyrgyzstan-01242014175848.html>

¹² <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/01/24/us-kyrgyzstan-uighurs-idUSBREA0N16J20140124>

¹³ *ibid.*

but this could not be corroborated. Contention remains regarding whether or not the men were armed to begin with, with no subsequent investigation ever conducted.

Kyrgyzstan remains a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) along with Central Asian neighbors Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and China, who maintain a close military and security relationship and act in unison against so-called separatism in China's western region.

Kyrgyzstan, geographically speaking, also borders East Turkestan to the west and so acts as the most proximate route out of China for Uyghurs choosing to flee from the region. Questions still remain over whether the group was indeed refugees looking to escape from China.

JANUARY 24

Six Uyghurs were shot dead after setting off two improvised explosive devices (IEDs) at a hair salon and vegetable market, with another six having been killed by their own bomb while their vehicle was surrounded by police. The incidents occurred in Xinhe, Aksu prefecture. Five other suspects were captured shortly following the explosions¹⁴. Chinese media stated that, upon police investigation, the explosions were "organized, premeditated terrorist attacks"¹⁵.

FEBRUARY 11

Eleven Uyghurs were killed while attacking a team of police close to the Kyrgyz border in Wushi County, Aksu prefecture. Eight were shot dead by police and another three were subsequently killed by the detonation of their own bomb as they rammed a vehicle carrying explosives into a column of police cars¹⁶. Two civilians and two police officers were also injured in the incident.

The incident is illustrative of the differing accounts between that of the Chinese and others in the region. The state released few details regarding the incident, merely describing it as an "organized, premeditated terrorist assault targeting the police"¹⁷. The incident was also framed as an assault inspired by Islamic extremism and separatism, eluding to an international connection.

Police procedure during the incident follows a predictable pattern whereby the police shoot and kill with little or no accountability after the fact. Due process is circumvented while counter-terrorism remains the standard justification for the action.

FEBRUARY 14

Eleven people were killed and another four were injured in an incident involving Uyghurs and police in the village of Toqquzaq, Uqturpan County, Aksu Prefecture. A group of Uyghurs was reportedly being checked by police and an altercation ensued in which one of the Uyghur men pulled out a knife and attacked a police officer¹⁸. Of the eleven that were killed, the only one named was Mehmet Tohti of East Turkestan.

MARCH 1

An attack at the Kunming Rail Station in the southwestern city of Kunming left thirty-three dead and over 130 injured. The attack marked an even further escalation of violence in the conflict between

¹⁴ <http://www.economist.com/blogs/analects/2014/01/more-violence-East-Turkestan>

¹⁵ <http://english.cri.cn/6909/2014/01/27/2724s810196.htm>

¹⁶ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-26192811>

¹⁷ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-02/16/c_133119470.htm

¹⁸ <http://www.rfa.org/uyghur/xewerler/kishilik-hoquq/uyghur-qarshiliq-12122014222554.html>

Uyghurs and the Chinese. It was the first such attack to which Uyghurs have been blamed that occurred outside of East Turkestan. Four attackers were shot dead and another was detained at the scene.

The Uyghur district of the city was quickly swept following the attack and many were rounded up for questioning, some at gun point¹⁹. The district also saw a heavy security presence in the weeks following the attack. Two days following the incident, Xinhua reported that a terrorist gang of eight people were responsible for the attack²⁰ and that three suspects had been arrested for the crime.

Although the motive behind the attack remains unclear, Chinese media were quick to suggest that it was separatist forces linked to international terrorist networks that spearheaded the attack. Such a link, however, is so far unsubstantiated, with no evidence to suggest that the attacks were carried out with international involvement.

On September 12, 2014, three men were sentenced to death (Iskandar Ehet, Turgun Tohtunyaz and Hasayn Muhammad) for leading terrorist organization and intentional homicide, and another to life in prison (Patigul Tohti), because she was pregnant at the time of her detention²¹. The court said that the plot had been motivated by “extremist religious thinking” and were said to have met in December to plan the attack.

The day prior to the sentencing, China’s top prosecutor, on September 11, called for swifter trials of “terrorists, religious extremists and makers of firearms and explosives”²² in a bid to continue to ramp up stricter security measures.

MARCH 19

A Chinese police officer, Osmanjan Ghoji, was stabbed to death in Urumqi by a Uyghur man, Ilyar Rehmutulla, from Aksu prefecture. The attack happened shortly following a meeting of police and state officials in the Yamalik district of Urumqi²³. RFA reported that the incident appeared to be political in nature, taking into consideration the location and target of the attack²⁴. The assailant was killed by police shortly afterwards.

APRIL 13

A Uyghur student, Abdulbasit Ablimit, was shot dead and two others were wounded after the seventeen-year-old allegedly drove through a security checkpoint on his motorcycle in Kelpin County, Aksu prefecture. The regional government reported that warning shots were fired into the air just prior to the shooting, and that the victim seized the officer’s firearm. No evidence, however, was provided to confirm either narrative²⁵.

Close to 500 marched to the county office in protest of the killing, demanding that action be taken with dozens of Uyghurs reportedly detained following the protests. In the aftermath of the protests, 70 people were arrested and of those, seventeen were subsequently sentenced to anywhere between

¹⁹ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/03/us-china-attack-idUSBREA220Z120140303>

²⁰ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/10673092/Chinese-police-solve-Kunming-massacre.html>

²¹ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/09/12/us-china-East-Turkestan-idUSKBN0H70A220140912>

²² *Ibid.*

²³ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/19/East-Turkestan-stabbing-police-officer-killed-in-urumqi>

²⁴ <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/stab-03182014145601.html>

²⁵ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/04/17/us-china-East-Turkestan-idUSBREA3G0BC20140417>



Family members and friends take Ablimit's cloth-wrapped body through the streets in protest march. (Photo Courtesy RFA).

six months and seven years. As is usually the case, no reliable investigation was ever launched in relation to the incident and no new information was released in the months that followed.

APRIL 18

Seven people were killed during a shootout between a Uyghur man and border guards while attempting to cross into Vietnam in Quang Ninh province. The man was one of sixteen other migrants looking to leave the country, when he seized a gun from a border guard and opened fire. The subsequent exchange left five Uyghurs and two Vietnamese guards dead. The statement from the government also suggested that some jumped from the office to their deaths²⁶.

Because no independent reporting is permitted in the town, very little subsequent information has been provided concerning the incident. Uyghurs have a notoriously difficult time trying to flee the county with many choosing to leave through the southeast for fear of being handed to Chinese authorities if they escape through states to the west who actively cooperate with the Chinese authorities through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

APRIL 27

Three Chinese officials were murdered while on a fishing trip in Kargilik County, Kashgar prefecture, on the first day of Xi Jinping's four day regional visit. The deaths were likely in connection with the visit of the President as was the deadly blast at a railway station in Urumqi just days later. Much of the information surrounding the incident may have been suppressed because of the state visit.

The men, according to RFA, were senior county level officials – one the head of a bank and the other two chiefs of the telecommunications department – and were also travelling with a fourth man who was the director of a state-owned company²⁷.

A large number of local inhabitants had been detained in connection with the killings, with upwards of 150 being interrogated with three to five initial suspects being identified²⁸.

APRIL 30

A bomb and knife attack at a train station in Urumqi killed three and injured another 79. The two men identified as the attackers were both killed in the incident and a third civilian was also killed. One of the attackers was identified as Sedirdin Sawut, a 39-year-old man from Aksu prefecture, though the

²⁶ http://www.salon.com/2014/04/18/7_die_in_shooting_at_china_vietnam_border

²⁷ <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/murder-05142014192309.html>

²⁸ <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/05/15/asia-pacific/three-han-chinese-officials-reportedly-slain-East-Turkestan-xi-visit>

second remains unidentified. Chinese police were said to be hunting ten family members of the alleged bomber for further information.

The attack occurred just hours after China's President Xi Jinping concluded his trip to the region, suggesting that the attack was intended as a message to the Chinese leader. According to Reuters "Xi promised "decisive action" against the "terrorists" behind the attack"²⁹, a now typical statement by Chinese leaders following such incidents. The government more specifically blamed Islamic militants and separatists ostensibly looking to establish an independent state.

It has also been feared that the attack could lead to even more severe repressive measures on the part of the state as Xi also stated that "The battle to combat violence and terrorism will not allow even a moment of slackness, and decisive actions must be taken to resolutely suppress the terrorists' rampant momentum"³⁰. Although stamping out "terrorism" has become an even greater priority for leadership in the region, Xi insists that holding up the rule of law remains an imperative as well.

The attack also had security implications, as the Guardian put it, "high level authorities, rattled by the incident, seek to rush the introduction of a new anti-terrorism law"³¹ which is likely to be released towards the end of the year. The legislation will look to define what constitutes an act of terrorism and delineate the roles of different law enforcement groups in the anti-terror campaign.

MAY 18

Two Uyghurs were shot dead and another captured after being accused of conducting a raid on a police station in Guma, Hotan prefecture, late the night before. The suspects were cornered in Sanju village in Muji Township before police opened fire³². Two police officers were injured during the initial attack in Muji Township. Uyghur farmers also participated reluctantly in the police operation out of fear that they may be labelled "terrorist sympathizers" otherwise.

MAY 20

Chinese police opened fire at a protest involving hundreds of Uyghurs, in response to the detention of several women and middle school girls for wearing headscarves in Kucha County, Aksu prefecture. Upwards of four may have been killed in the incident and several others wounded along with dozens more being detained³³. The power was reportedly cut off and security forces were on full display in the streets.

Increasingly strict curbs on Islamic practices and culture, including the wearing of particular clothing, like the headscarf on women and beards on men, has sparked protest among the masses who feel discriminated against in the region. Uyghurs insist that many of these practices and symbols are a marker of Uyghur, rather than Muslim, identity.

MAY 22

Forty-three people, including four of the assailants, were killed when five attackers drove two SUVs into a crowded market in Urumqi while detonating explosives. Explosives were also hurled out the

²⁹ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/04/30/us-china-East-Turkestan-blast-idUSBREA3T0HX20140430>

³⁰ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/01/chinese-leader-terrorism-railway-attack>

³¹ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/04/chinese-police-relatives-sedirdin-sawut-East-Turkestan-urumqi-station-bomber>

³² <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/attack-05172014153700.html>

³³ <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/dress-05202014202002.html>

windows of the vehicles at shoppers in the vicinity. More than ninety were also wounded in the attack³⁴. The fifth attacker was captured by police later the same day.

Chinese media suggested that the men were inspired by overseas jihadists and that the men, “took part in illegal religious activities, watched and listened to terrorist violence video and audio materials”³⁵. The East Turkestan Daily called for unity in the region and to first maintain social stability and pursue harmony³⁶. Police and security forces immediately ordered any photos or videos of the attack at the scene to be deleted and government censors were swift to remove any such media from Weibo, China’s popular blogging website.

There was also an immediate show of force on the part of Chinese security forces shortly after and lasting for days. Thousands of military vehicles and personnel were on display on the day following the attack and security remained tightly controlled.

The attack continued a series of escalating violence in the region and marks the most deadly attack in East Turkestan to date. Response to the attack was also typical of the regime, calling for a one year crack-down that will make use of “political and legal forces, army and armed police in East Turkestan”³⁷. The campaign would mark the start of hundreds of arrests and detentions in the region over the ensuing months, and has been said to continue until June 2015.

MAY 28

Two Uyghur teens were shot dead following an alleged knife attack that injured two others in Kashgar city. According to RFA, police found the suspects after responding to public complaints, who were holding knives and had injured two Chinese³⁸. The suspects were subsequently shot and killed by police based on the recent “shoot to kill” order given by the government.

MAY 29

Four people were killed, including a police officer, and several others were wounded in Toksu County, Aksu prefecture in separate incidents. Two Uyghur men and one police officer were killed during a raid on a supposed hideout of “separatists” near Karatagh village. State security officials reported that the police officer was stabbed to death when an eight man team raided the house in search of two suspects. Imin Tomur and his brother Rahman were killed on the spot, leaving their friend, Yasin Osman, injured. It was conceded by the head of the security team that Rahman Tomur was in fact not responsible for the bomb-making case, but was killed anyway on suspicion that he was an accomplice to the main suspect.

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In a separate incident, a police officer was killed when four Uyghur men who staged a motorcycle accident Misha Township, Kashgar prefecture. The men lured the officer, Li Hongjiang, out of his car when they stabbed him to death nearly 40 times and dumping his body in a reservoir in nearby Peyziwat County³⁹. Li was recently appointed to head the new one-year “strike hard” campaign in Misha Township, suggesting that the murder was likely politically motivated.

³⁴ <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/25/world/asia/suspects-in-china-market-attack-identified.html>

³⁵ <http://english.cntv.cn/2014/05/24/ARTI1400887602983289.shtml>

³⁶ <http://xjrb.xjdaily.com/jryw/1068625.shtml>

³⁷ <http://english.cri.cn/6909/2014/05/23/2702s828101.htm>

³⁸ <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/attack-05282014184605.html>

³⁹ <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/arrests-07092014184913.html>

Four suspects were subsequently arrested in connection with the stabbing on July 1 and confessed to the murder.

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In yet another incident, a Uyghur man was shot dead in an alleged argument with government enforcement officials when a woman was forced to remove her headscarf by security personnel⁴⁰. Two others were reportedly injured in the incident when security forces were completing house to house checks.

JUNE 5

During a house to house search in Yengiawet village, Guma County, Hotan Prefecture, police were involved in an incident with a Uyghur family that left three Uyghurs dead⁴¹. Two of those killed were named as Abduraham Abduweli and Quhar Hemit along with a third victim that was not identified.

JUNE 14

Four Uyghurs were killed in connection with a raid on the home of Qeyser Qurban, in Qumqasar Township, Kashgar prefecture. Qurban, arrested on June 14 on charges that he led a group that planned to carry out attacks on a police station, was taken back to his home the same day with eight police officers to “secure what they said were the materials and weapons the group had planned to use in their attacks”⁴². Two Uyghur officers released the suspect from his handcuffs so that he was allowed back into his home ostensibly to gather weapons that he held, while the remaining officers stayed outside. Qurban then attacked one of the police officers with a knife from a nearby table as the second officer attempted to run out of the house. The second officer was then killed by police firing at the suspect from outside, along with the suspect himself.

RFA also reported that it could not be verified that the items collected in the home were intended to be used for a future attack on a local police station, or simply tools that the family used for farming. Some residents also suggested the two Uyghur policemen were intentionally put in harm’s way as the officers remained outside during the incident.

Two other suspects were shot and killed by police shortly after the raid, one four days following the raid and another on July 1, though very little information was provided regarding these incidents. Police were also reportedly searching for a fifth and final suspect. Like many other incidents, detailed information remains scarce as to the credibility of the story.

JUNE 20

During an incident in Manglay village, Karaquash County, Hotan Prefecture, a group of Uyghurs reportedly attacked police officers, to which the officers responded with force that eventually left five Uyghurs dead⁴³. Very little subsequent information was provided following the incident and no investigation was conducted.

⁴⁰ <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/violence-06052014203415.html>

⁴¹ <http://www.rfa.org/uyghur/xewerler/kishilik-hoquq/uyghur-qarshiliq-12122014222554.html>

⁴² <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/raid-07072014171755.html>

⁴³ <http://www.rfa.org/uyghur/xewerler/kishilik-hoquq/uyghur-qarshiliq-12122014222554.html>

JUNE 21

Thirteen were shot dead by police when they attempted to drive at least one vehicle into a police office building and detonate explosives in Kargilik County, Kashgar Prefecture⁴⁴. Three other police officers were said to have been injured during the incident⁴⁵. Very little information was provided by the state or other media outlets concerning the attack.

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A twenty-two year old male Uyghur was called into the police station in the village of Yeken in Elishku Township, Kashgar Prefecture, where he reportedly was at risk of being tortured. The man allegedly attacked police officers after he arrived, killing one (Taw Yuenjing) and seriously injuring another (Ding Feng)⁴⁶.

JUNE 22

Five police officers were stabbed and killed in an attack at a security checkpoint in Qaraqash County, Hotan prefecture. Two of the officers were killed while guarding the building and another three died when the attackers set fire to a room where the officers had been sleeping⁴⁷. There have been no since reports suggesting that attackers have been captured.

The attacks were said to have been in response to the harassment of Uyghur women wearing headscarves and men who sported beards. Men and women were stopped, held and interrogated by police in the days preceding the incident.

JULY 9

Police shot and killed one Uyghur man and captured another five suspects following an incident which left six farmers dead. The incidents took place in Uchturpan County, Aksu prefecture. Residents said that between 3 a.m. and 4 a.m. on July 9, the suspects rode into the town on motorcycles and fled in a van thought to have been stolen from the victims⁴⁸. Two suspects were unofficially identified as Merdan Tursun and Ablikim Ablimit by the head of a nearby village.

JULY 18

During a house to house search in Beshkent village, Yarkand County, Kashgar Prefecture, a women was forced to remove her hijab by a police officer who had entered her and her family's home. A conflict ensued when the woman refused to remove her headscarf, leaving five family members dead, including a 71 year old man as well as a 7 year old boy, along with one officer⁴⁹. Little information was provided following the incident and no transparent investigation took place.

JULY 25

During house to house searches performed by police towards the end of Ramadan, at least eleven people were killed in a dispute near Tasheriq village, Toqsu County, Aksu Prefecture⁵⁰. The deaths of

⁴⁴ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/06/21/us-china-security-idUSKBN0EW07D20140621>

⁴⁵ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-27953164>

⁴⁶ <http://www.rfa.org/uyghur/xewerler/kishilik-hoquq/uyghur-qarshiliq-12122014222554.html>

⁴⁷ <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/violence-06222014163028.html>

⁴⁸ <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/protection-07172014165816.html>

⁴⁹ <http://www.rfa.org/uyghur/xewerler/kishilik-hoquq/uyghur-qarshiliq-12122014222554.html>

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

these family members would be the precipitant that led to the large-scale protests in Yarkand County, leaving upwards of 2-3 thousand dead and hundreds arrested.

JULY 28

*An additional section (July Yarkand Massacre) has been added to include the events that took place in Yarkand County, Kashgar Prefecture, where upwards of 3000 Uyghurs were killed.

JULY 30

Jume Tahir, an Imam who served as a deputy of the National People's Congress, was killed outside a mosque in the city of Kashgar by three Uyghur attackers, two of which later shot dead and the other arrested. According to the LA Times, virtual martial law was subsequently declared in the city following the killing, with police barricades erected and Internet and text messaging services suspended in an attempt to prevent word of the Imam's death from spreading⁵¹.

His death was most likely in response to increasing cooperation with the government as he vehemently supported the Communist Party following the state's brutal response to the riots in 2009 in Urumqi. Michael Clarke, quoted in the Japan Times, argued that "In a sense, it is attempting to signal that this is a conflict that is now society wide. You have to now choose sides"⁵²

The incident signals long-standing issues in relation to the overwhelming control that the central government holds over religious leaders in East Turkestan. Religion generally has been tightly regulated for decades with strict oversight for those looking to teach religious practice. Uyghurs in the region have developed a growing resentment for Imams virtually controlled by the Communist Party for decades and the attack acts as a pertinent symbol of this discontent.

AUGUST 1

Sparse reporting suggests that nine "suspected terrorists" were killed and another captured with the help of Uyghur "volunteers"⁵³. A newly developed tactic has been to enlist Uyghurs into Chinese operations to aid in hunting down alleged criminals.

AUGUST 4

A Uyghur farmer, Tursen Emet, was killed by two Uyghur men in the village of Uchturpan in Yarowruk Township, Aksu prefecture, while asking for the identification of the two men. According to RFA, state officials stated that "the two suspects are believed to have been involved in the murder of more than a dozen people, including 11 Chinese"⁵⁴.

Emet had been compelled to join the latest one-year anti-terror campaign by the central government beginning in May and was tasked with leading a team of two other Uyghur farmers in searching for the two suspects involved in the aforementioned killings. Emet was wearing a government guard uniform at the time, unlike his party, which likely suggested to the attackers that he was a government official, leading to his targeting.

⁵¹ <http://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-china-imam-killed-20140730-story.html>

⁵² <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/08/03/asia-pacific/crime-legal-asia-pacific/imams-killing-in-china-may-be-aimed-at-making-muslim-uighurs-choose-sides/#.VBBpXvmSyQw.html>

⁵³ <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/murder-08112014195601.html>

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

Uyghur residents are increasingly pressured to join local authorities in conducting raids and to root out potential criminal activity during the latest anti-terror campaign.

AUGUST 23

Three Uyghur farmers were shot dead in Aykol Township, Aksu prefecture, after allegedly resisting arrest, ostensibly on charges relating to suspected separatist activities. RFA, however, reported that the three were rounded up for possession of knives and axes, but did not commit any “tangible” crimes⁵⁵. In three separate incidents, Tuniyaz Qurban, 26, Omer Abla, 21, and Yasin Awut, 25, were killed over a ten day period, all following a similar pattern.

Others farmers who had witnessed one incident said that “the security forces started shooting a few minutes after they got out of their vehicle”⁵⁶ suggesting that there was little chance for any genuine resistance on the part of the victim. The escalation in the aggressive approach taken by police in the region follows a similar pattern whereby the victim is provided little, if any, opportunity for explanation, let alone due legal process.

Thirteen others were also detained on similarly dubious charges including possession of religious books, knives, axes, and fitness gear including boxing gloves and sand bags. Very few details have yet to surface to verify the accuracy of statements by local officials regarding the incident.

SEPTEMBER 21

Fifty people were killed and an unknown number injured in a series of bombings southwest of Urumqi in Luntai County, Bayinguoleng prefecture⁵⁷. Initial reports cited the death toll at just two people in the day following the incidents, but numbers were subsequently elevated four days later⁵⁸. Bombs were set off at two police stations, an outdoor agricultural market and a shop entrance.

Four days after the incident, state media reported that 40 “rioters”, six civilians and four police officers were killed in the bombings⁵⁹, taking the total to 50. Fifty-four civilians, including thirty-two Uyghurs were also injured. The alleged main suspect, Mamat Tursun, was shot dead during the incident, with state reports suggesting that he had been operating as an extremist since 2003. An unknown number were also arrested following the incident. Chinese authorities called it an “organized and serious” terrorist attack.

It was later reported that at least one innocent Uyghur bystander was killed in the violence. Radio Free Asia reported that “Rozi Osman, 49, was the only known civilian who was killed” in the attacks on a police station in Bugur County. Osman’s younger brother spoke with RFA and said that he found his brother dead outside of the restaurant he worked at with a bullet wound to the chest⁶⁰.

SEPTEMBER 23

A Uyghur man died while serving a ten-year sentence for “illegal religious activities” amid concerns of torture⁶¹. Yakob Idris, was reportedly in good health when he was sentenced on May 28, 2014, along

⁵⁵ <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/shootings-08222014182027.html>

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-29373158>

⁵⁸ <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/23/world/asia/explosions-kill-at-least-2-in-restive-region-of-china.html>

⁵⁹ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-09/25/c_127035563.htm

⁶⁰ <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/civilian-10032014170450.html>

⁶¹ <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/yakob-idris-11052014183226.html>

with 54 other people. He had been transferred to a number of prisons in East Turkestan with few details emerging about his condition. Chinese authorities argued that he had been suffering from a number of ailments throughout his time in prison, though the ultimate cause of death is not clear.

OCTOBER 10

Reuters reported that a Uyghur policewoman, Peridem Kuresh, who was pregnant, was stabbed to death by two male attackers in Hotan Prefecture. Another police officer, Ablkim Mehsut, was also killed by the two men, identified as Abdurehim Tuniyaz, 25, and Ablikim Abdurehim, 26, by RFA⁶². The initial attacks reportedly occurred near a market in Pishan County, though sparse details have emerged in relation to the incident⁶³.

The two men then traveled to nearby Kokterek Township, where they killed another police officer and two government officials. RFA also suggested that the attacks may have been in connection with the death of one of their brothers in police custody. The pair were on their way back to their home in Guma Township when they were subsequently surrounded by police at a checkpoint and shot dead.

With regards to the death of the Uyghur police woman, it comes on the heels of a number of similar attacks targeting Uyghurs who have joined police and security forces in the region. Perpetrators have been said to act in retaliation for those that take up posts in public service or security positions, ostensibly working for the CCP.

OCTOBER 12

Twenty-two people were killed in an attack on a farmers market in East Turkestan's Bachu County, Kashgar Prefecture, leaving dozens injured. Four male attackers reportedly stormed into the market hurling explosives and attacked civilians and police officers before they were subsequently gunned down by security forces⁶⁴. The death toll included all four attackers and two police officers involved in the incident.

Reporting of the incident was also delayed by Chinese media, which is frequently the case in the aftermath of violence⁶⁵. As with many of these violent incidents, reporting has been only minimal with very little transparent information coming out of the region in a timely manner.

NOVEMBER 28

Fifteen people were reportedly killed and another fourteen injured in Shache County, west of the region's capital, Kashgar, when attackers threw bombs out a window before stabbing civilians lining the street⁶⁶. Eleven of those that were killed were said to be attackers, though reporting in the region has been expectedly sparse and unreliable. Police in the area declined to provide any further information about the incident⁶⁷.

⁶² <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/violence-10132014172244.html>

⁶³ <http://af.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idAFKCN0I204020141013>

⁶⁴ <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/attack-10182014194433.html>

⁶⁵ <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/20/world/asia/at-least-22-reportedly-killed-in-attack-in-western-china.html?>

⁶⁶ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-30258011>

⁶⁷ <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/15-dead-attack-west-china-East-Turkestan-region-article-1.2027475>

IV. JULY YARKAND MASSACRE

Although Uyghurs had been killed consistently in countless incidents throughout 2014, what occurred on July 28, 2014, and in the days following would mark the deadliest episode since the July protests in 2009, many details of which remain murky to this day. As is typically the case, all communication in and out of the region was halted by Chinese authorities as Internet access and cell communication was shut down for months.

One of the precipitants of the initial protests, according to Uyghur sources⁶⁸, was the killing of at least eleven people in a dispute over a woman who was forced to remove her headscarf during a house to house search conducted by police. The incident took place near Tasheriq village, Toqsu County, Aksu Prefecture⁶⁹. The deaths of these family members would then lead to large-scale protests in the days following.

According to Chinese media sources, ninety-six civilians were killed and hundreds more were injured when police and security forces clashed with the protestors in Yarkand County, Kashgar prefecture, including fifty-nine Uyghurs and another thirty-seven civilians. Initial reporting by state media suggested that just dozens of civilians had been killed in the clash, but later updated its count by later confirming that ninety-six had in fact been killed and another 215 arrested. Although the attack took place on Monday, July 28, state media took nearly a day to release any official reports about the incident.

Differing accounts over the incident exist with state reports suggesting that government buildings, a police station and civilians had been attacked by a mob of Uyghur civilians wielding knives and axes. The Xinhua news agency reported that attackers had “set up roadblocks, slashed at some passengers and forced others to join the attack”⁷⁰. Uyghur groups, however, argued that the incident involved residents protesting against “Chinese security forces’ heavy-handed Ramadan crackdown...and extra-judicial use of lethal force in recent weeks”⁷¹.

Uyghur sources from inside the region, however, stated that upwards of 3000 Uyghurs were killed during and in the aftermath of the initial protests, with thousands arrested and an unknown number disappeared. It was alleged that nearly all of those who participated in the protests were gunned down by police and security personnel and many others were then killed during house to house searches that followed⁷². These reports also suggest that aside from the first day where upwards of 100 Uyghurs were killed, hundreds, and possibly thousands more were systematically killed by police in the week that followed. Details about these events continue to be shrouded in mystery, though credible evidence suggests that Chinese police and security forces acted brutally and without restraint.

A letter from a Uyghur living in Yarkand County was sent to Uyghur sources outside China detailing the potential scale of the extra-judicial killings that were going on⁷³. The letter detailed a clash with security forces where a group of women had gathered to spend the night together and celebrate the end of Ramadan and the arrival of Eid. Many of the women were subsequently killed in the incident as the men had been away for communal prayers.

⁶⁸ <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/yarkand-08052014150547.html>

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/8/3/china-96-dead-inEastTurkestanattackslastweek.html>

⁷¹ <http://uyghuramerican.org/article/uaa-condemns-state-violence-against-uyghur-civilians-elishku-township.html>

⁷² <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/yarkand-08052014150547.html>

⁷³ <http://www.uyghurcongress.org/en/?p=23088>

The use of drones by Chinese security forces was also reported during the unrest as a means to monitor the movement of Uyghurs in the region⁷⁴. Additional reports confirmed that China has continued to use drones in an effort to aid in its counter-terror operations, though no credible information has been released as to the scale of these operations.

During the month of July, the state put in place serious curbs on the practice of fasting during Ramadan. Muslim students from universities across East Turkestan were banned from fasting, along with employees from several government departments. Those refusing to eat would be given official warnings with risk of punishment thereafter. The bans were ostensibly enacted to “protect students’ well-being and prevent the use of schools and government offices from promoting religion”⁷⁵.

The events that took place at the end of July and in the following days must be seen in the context of the overwhelming pressure that Uyghurs continued to live under. Restrictions and outright bans on regular religious and cultural practices had only been increasing from the previous year which led some to assemble and protest the hardening state policy. Legitimate peaceful protests have essentially been prohibited, and those that choose to subvert state power are now at tremendous risk of detention, injury or even death.

V. DEATH SENTENCES

The following is a list of the known death sentences meted out by Chinese authorities throughout 2014 for charges ranging from “illegal separatism” to “terrorism”. Death sentences have been on the rise in China with a near 100 percent conviction rate for those facing the penalty.

MAY 29

One Uyghur man was sentenced to death at a sports stadium in Yining City, west of the region’s capital, Urumqi, and close to China’s border with Kazakhstan⁷⁶. His verdict came amid sentences of another fifty-four people put on trial in front of a crowd of more than 7000 spectators, reminiscent of old style mass sentencing during China’s revolutionary period⁷⁷. It is unclear what specific crime was levelled against this man, but state media cited that those sentenced were ostensibly guilty of terrorism, separatism and murder.

This was the first death sentence meted out by the regime following the announcement of a one year anti-terror campaign aimed at supposed terrorist groups in the region⁷⁸. The state reiterated its common line that they mean to combat “terrorism, separatism and religious extremism” in the process. That week, China’s party chief emphasized that they were commencing a “people’s war against terrorism” after an attack in a market in Urumqi⁷⁹.

⁷⁴ <http://qz.com/256104/china-is-now-using-drones-to-catch-terrorists-in-xinjiang/>

⁷⁵ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia-pacific/2014/07/china-bans-ramadan-fasting-muslim-province-20147371648541558.html>

⁷⁶ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-27600397>

⁷⁷ <http://www.aljazeera.com/humanrights/2014/05/fifty-five-sentenced-china-mass-trial-201452814535938889.html>

⁷⁸ <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-05-23/china-starts-anti-terror-campaign-after-East-Turkestan-blasts.html>

⁷⁹ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/26/china-200-separatists-East-Turkestan-anti-terrorism-crackdown>

JUNE 5

Nine people were sentenced to death among eighty-one in total on terrorism charges⁸⁰. The charges, as released by Chinese state media, were related to “organizing, leading and participating in a terrorist organization”. This also comes amid China’s claims that they have broken up twenty-three terrorist groups, including five that were allegedly planning another bomb attack⁸¹, though no evidence was provided to support these claims.

The eighty-one sentences were handed down by six separate courts, hearing twenty-three separate cases, including those nine death sentences as well as a number of other long custodial sentences. David Zweig, political science professor from Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, argued that “the Chinese government felt threatened by the attacks and wanted to show the public it had the means to stop them”, though the use of force in the region can very well lead to greater animosity and heightened tensions among the population.

JUNE 16

Three men were sentenced to death in connection an attack in October, 2013, at Beijing’s Tiananmen Square that left five people dead⁸². The three men sentenced were Husanjan Wuxur, Yusup Umarniyaz and Yusup Ahmat, for allegedly "organizing and leading a terrorist group and endangering public security". The attack involved a vehicle that crashed into a crowd and burst into flames, killing two tourists along with the three attackers, and injuring thirty-eight. Although the three men were not directly involved in the incident, Chinese officials claim that they had played an active part in organizing the attack.

Thirteen people were also executed on June 16 in connection with what state-run media outlet, Xinhua News, reported as terrorist attacks and violent crimes⁸³. It is unclear whether these thirteen included those that were sentenced a week and half before.

SEPTEMBER 12

Three men were sentenced to death and another woman to life in prison for a major attack on a train station with left forty-one killed and another 141 injured⁸⁴. Iskandar Ehet, Turgun Tohtunyaz and Hasayn Muhammad were sentenced to death for "leading a terrorist organization and intentional homicide" according to Chinese authorities. The fourth defendant, Patigul Tohti, was also jailed for life because she was pregnant at the time of her detention.

Eight people were said to be involved in planning the attack and just five in carrying out the attack itself. The attack sparked the government’s year-long anti-terror campaign which has left at least hundreds arrested and even more under increasingly harsh security measures.

⁸⁰ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-27714794>

⁸¹ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/05/china-sentences-nine-death-terrorism-offences-East-Turkestan>

⁸² <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-27864060>

⁸³ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-06/16/c_133411927.htm

⁸⁴ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/09/12/us-china-East-Turkestan-idUSKBN0H70A220140912>

OCTOBER 13

Twelve people were sentenced to death for their involvement in an incident in late July which left ninety-six people dead and scores injured⁸⁵. Fifteen others also received suspended death sentences, nine were imprisoned for life and another twenty were reportedly given sentences ranging between four and twenty years⁸⁶. The incident also resulted in the deaths of allegedly fifty-nine other attackers, as reported by the Chinese press, though the number or affiliation of those could not be independently verified.

Chinese media reports said that those convicted were guilty of “organizing, leading or participating in organised terror crimes, homicide, illegal construction of explosive devices, arson, kidnapping and harming public safety”.

DECEMBER 8

Eight Uyghurs were sentenced to death in connection with two violent incidents and another five were given suspended sentences, which will likely be commuted to life in prison⁸⁷.

One incident resulted in one death and injuries to up to 79, which also reportedly left the two assailants dead as well, though the defendant’s connection with the crime is not yet clear. Two Uyghurs were sentenced to death in connection with this case. In a separate incident, which led to the sentencing of six others, 39 people were killed along with four attackers and over 90 others were wounded when assailants threw explosives and drove vehicles through a crowd in Urumqi.

The attacks were also attributed to the East Turkestan Islamic Movement⁸⁸, though the existence of the organization has been widely disputed by academics⁸⁹. The defendants were found guilty for “participating in a terrorist organization, handling explosives and corruption”⁹⁰.

VI. ARRESTS AND ARBITRARY DETENTIONS

China’s Chief Prosecutor of the Xinjiang People’s Procuratorate, at the 12th annual Xinjiang regional People’s Congress session, proudly proclaimed that arrests in East Turkestan doubled as compared to 2013, stating that Chinese authorities have “shortened the time between approving arrests and prosecution in major terrorist-related cases so the suspects can be tried as soon as possible to show the region’s determination to fight terrorism in accordance with the law”⁹¹. He confirmed that 27,164 “terror suspects” were arrested in the region in 2014, despite providing no substantive information about the nature of the arrests.

The following is a *non-exhaustive* list of arrests, detentions and sentences meted out by Chinese authorities in relation to “terrorism”, “separatism” and “religious extremism” charges. Although it is nearly impossible to compile an exhaustive list of arbitrary arrests and unwarranted sentences, the

⁸⁵ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia-pacific/2014/10/china-sentences-12-death-East-Turkestan-20141013125835795435.html>

⁸⁶ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-29592882>

⁸⁷ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia-pacific/2014/12/eight-sentenced-death-china-attacks-20141288141774366.html>

⁸⁸ <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/12/08/uk-china-East-Turkestan-knife-attacks-idUKKBN0JM0T720141208>

⁸⁹ <http://www.eastwestcenter.org/fileadmin/stored/pdfs/PS006.pdf>

⁹⁰ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-30374683>

⁹¹ <http://www.christiantimes.com/article/china.tightens.grip.on.muslim.region.as.number.of.arrests.goes.up.by.95/50575.htm>

following provides an outline of the attitude and approach of Chinese authorities and some of the more significant cases involving ostensibly unlawful behavior through the lens of counter-terrorism. References for the sources are cited below^{92, 93, 94, 95}.

- In late January 2014, local authorities from Ilchi Village, Hotan Prefecture detained scores of Uyghur women with Islamic dress in an iron cage and fined their families five thousand Yuan (\$800 USD).
- Eleven Uyghurs in Urumqi and nine more in Wuhan were arrested during the 2014 Chinese New Year Festival.
- Shortly following the Kunming Incident on March 1, 2014, Chinese authorities in Shadan, Yunnan Province, forcibly relocated more than 900 Uyghurs to East Turkestan (Xinjiang Province).
- On April 13, 2014, Chinese authorities in Kelpin County, Aksu Prefecture, arrested more than 70 people for attending a funeral ceremony following the killing of a 17-year-old high school student killed by security forces the previous day before for crossing a traffic red light – seventeen were later imprisoned from anywhere between six months and seven years.
- On 20 May 2014 the Chinese police in Alakagha Village, Kucha County arrested a number of Uyghur women in Islamic dress on streets and detained them in local police department. Upon demonstrating family members of the detainees, the Chinese security forces opted fire and gun down 5 Uyghurs including two dead.
- 55 Uyghurs were sentenced with severe penalties in an open court organized by Chinese judiciary authorities in Ili Prefecture with a participation of more than 7000 spectators
- On June 4, 2014, Chinese judicial authorities in Urumqi announced the arrest of 29 Uyghurs with alleged charges of separatism, illegal trade, and ethnic discrimination
- On June 5, 2014, 81 Uyghurs were sentenced by 6 Chinese courts in Urumqi, Kashgar, Hotan and Aksu respectively. Nine of them were sentenced to death and another 68 received long prison terms for charges ranging from membership in alleged terrorist organizations to procession of illegal audio and video materials.
- On June 20, 2014, 16 Uyghurs were arrested by Chinese authorities in Urumqi for wearing Islamic dress, and participating illegal religious activities.
- Nine Uyghurs were sentenced by the Chinese judiciary in Chapchal County on June 25, 2014, in an open court with sentences ranging from three to fourteen years.
- On June 27, 2014, 53 Uyghurs in Peyziwat County and 28 in Lop County were sentenced in open courts in Kashgar and Hotan Prefectures, respectively. Jail sentences ranged from one to ten years.
- 113 Uyghurs were sentenced in an open court on June 30, 2014, by the Chinese judiciary in Kashgar Prefecture, among them, 4 Uyghurs received life sentences.
- On June 10, 2014, in open courts in Ghulja, Bortala, Urumqi, Aksu, Turpan, Hotan and Atush Prefectures, 32 Uyghurs were sentenced with various different prison terms.
- 13 Uyghurs were sentenced in an open court on June 11, 2014, in Cherchen County, Korla Prefecture.
- On June 21, 2014, 23 Uyghurs and four Hui were arrested by Chinese security forces for an alleged illegal gathering in Urumqi.
- 25 Uyghurs, including two women, were sentenced by a Bingtuan court to sentences ranging from three years to life on August 8, 2014.
- On August 15, 2014, the Chinese judiciary in Kunes County, Ghulja Prefecture, sentenced 28 Uyghurs for crimes relating to separatism.

⁹² <http://www.rfa.org/uyghur/xewerler/kishilik-hoquq/siyasiy-qurban-12182014213606.html>

⁹³ <http://www.rfa.org/uyghur/xewerler/kishilik-hoquq/olturulgen-uyghurlar-12192014233028.html>

⁹⁴ <http://www.rfa.org/uyghur/xewerler/kishilik-hoquq/zulum-12222014212708.html>

⁹⁵ <http://www.rfa.org/uyghur/xewerler/kishilik-hoquq/tutqan-qilinghanlar-12262014185050.html>

- According to the Chinese police authorities, 334 Uyghurs were arrested in relation to terrorism charges during September and October 2014 – among them 294 were sentenced to various prison terms.
- 16 Uyghurs were arrested by Guangxin police during their attempt to flee China over the Sino-Vietnam border on September 10, 2014.
- Chinese authorities arrested more than 100 Uyghurs in connection with the Bugur Incident on September 21, 2014, where 42 Uyghurs were shot dead.
- On October 13, 2014, 27 Uyghurs were sentenced to death in connection with the incident in Ilishku, Yarkand County on July 8, 2014.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are a number of recommendations for the WUC to move forward in its campaign to ultimately ensure that the Uyghur people are afforded the rights and freedoms that they justly deserve. The recommendations are directed inward, at our own organization as steps to be taken in the new year, as well as towards the Chinese government and the international community. The international community is made up not only by states, but by a vast collection of organizations working towards greater freedoms and opportunities, especially for dispossessed groups who hold vastly disproportionate power in their own lands. We strive to work together with organizations with these goals in mind.

Our recommendations include:

- Increased mediated dialogue with the Chinese as a first step to resolve the conflict at the international level.
- Ensure that the international community is well aware of the situation as well as the context.
- Work with the international community to pressure the PRC to adopt legal reforms – the WUC *must* develop stronger ties with more capable human rights organizations to gain credibility.
- Pressure China to allow for more transparent reporting of events in East Turkestan – grassroots reporting from citizens remains possible, but dangerous.
- Open channels that allow for the implementation of a legitimate autonomy law – so that some decision-making power may be handed to the Uyghur people immediately.
- Highlight the fact that China disregards its own constitution (and its clear protections on religious and cultural freedoms) in its treatment of the Uyghur people, as well as other ethnic nationalities and dissidents.
- Pressure the Chinese to ratify key international human rights treaties like the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).
- China must release political prisoners and ensure that proper legal procedures are undertaken.
- China must also discontinue its use of enforced disappearances of Uyghurs.
- Increased coverage and scrutiny by the international media in addressing the plight of the Uyghur people in their respective reports.

Views of the conflict have been particularly polarized between Uyghur and Chinese citizens living in and outside China. China blames the violence on Uyghur separatists, who are charged to be linked with international terrorist networks, whereas the Uyghur people complain that discrimination, intolerance and restrictions on religion and language rights are some of the primary motivators of anger amongst the population.

The ruling party in China has been effective at playing at these polarized understandings of the situation to ensure that there remains a definite level of animosity between the Chinese and the Uyghur. This achieves two primary objectives. The first is that it ensures that the state is provided the necessary domestic support needed to continue its harsh repression of the Uyghur people as a whole. Secondly, it sends strong signals to the international community about the nature of the situation and provides those with little experience of the conflict a particular context.

If the international community recognizes such a hostile relationship between the people, and not solely the government, they are similarly more likely to see the conflict as one stoked by the people themselves and not principally by state policies or state motivations. Recognizing motivations and root causes will be the crucial first step in resolving the most inherent problems faced in East Turkestan.

Whether or not Chinese authorities already understand this is a different matter altogether. State policy has been consistently in line with a traditional approach that sees dissent merely as unjustifiable disdain for legitimate legal authority. Before any real progress can be made, we must all be able to recognize the source of the present conflict – discriminatory and aggressive state policies that continue to fuel deep resentment among the Uyghur population. Pressuring the Chinese to put a stop to these practices will ultimately temper this antipathy and develop a platform on which long-standing animosities may be reconciled.