



PETITION
**EQUALITY FOR
UIGHURS**

Chairman of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission
Yang Jing Zhuren
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252 Taipingqiaodajie, Xichengqu
Beijingshi 100800
People's Republic of China

Dear Chairman,

We, the undersigned, are deeply concerned that Chinese government policies in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region are eroding the Uighur ethnic identity and fuelling discontent and ethnic tensions.

Recent unrest in the region, which according to official but disputed figures resulted in 197 deaths and over 1,600 injured, has highlighted government policies that claim to have improved the living conditions of the Uighur people, but in reality have placed restrictions on their ability to practise their own religion, to use their own language and to enjoy their own culture. These discriminatory policies and on-going abuses of rights to freedom of expression, association and religion need to be urgently addressed in order to achieve the 'social harmony' that the Chinese government seeks.

Freedom from discrimination, including on the basis of language and of ethnic or national origin, is at the very heart of the concept of human rights. This principle runs as a golden thread through international human rights law, and is reiterated, in one form or another, in all human rights treaties, including those to which China is a state party.

We believe that in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, China has failed to comply with this general principle, and with its specific elaborations in a variety of human rights treaties.

Chinese domestic law, including its Constitution and Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law, also gives ethnic minorities the right to protect, preserve and promote their culture.

We urge you to introduce and integrate in domestic laws a clear definition and prohibition of discrimination on all grounds referred to in article 1 of the UN Convention against Racism.

We urge you to introduce effective measures to ensure that rights to freedom of expression, association and religion are fully respected in the region, and to ensure the true and effective participation of ethnic minority representatives in legislative, administrative and advisory bodies, and more generally in public life.

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