Articles and Questions

Each **free article** of ***What in the World?*** includes:   
  
1) a PDF file

*and*

2) a Word file

These files contain **only** the article and questions. They do **not** contain Answer Keys.

This **Word** file allows students to complete assignments using a computer either at school or at home. Teachers can assign all or parts of the file by email attachment or a school website. The **Word** file also allows teachers to:

• easily modify and format content including changing *fonts* and text sizes

• create a PDF document and use Adobe Reader's 'Read Out Loud Mode'

• save paper and copying costs and help protect the environment

• promote and encourage students’ computer skills

What Else Can You Do With The Word File?

#1) You can easily upload the file to Google Docs and share it with students or other teachers. **See how here:**

<https://support.google.com/drive/answer/2424368?hl=en>

#2) Translate the uploaded document into another language. (see **Tools>Translate document**).Google Docs will create a new copy of the original file but you will need to edit the document to suit your requirements. Google Docs can translate into over 100 languages including Spanish, Mandarin, German, etc. **See how here:**

<https://support.google.com/docs/answer/187189?hl=en&co=GENIE.Platform=Desktop>

**The Uyghurs of Xinjiang**



The Chinese government has committed a series of ongoing human rights abuses against Uyghurs. That was the finding of a strongly-worded 48-page study released on August 31 by the **Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)**. The document adds that the cruelties endured by this largely-Muslim minority group may amount to **crimes against humanity**.

The report comes after a four-year investigation. It is based in part on talks with Uyghurs who were held in massive detention centres in Xinjiang, the region where 12 million Uyghurs live. It stopped short of accusing the Chinese government of **genocide** for its actions against the Uyghurs. However, outside observers and many nations, including Canada, believe the definition fits.

Human rights organizations say that at least one million Uyghurs in Xinjiang have suffered in these camps at one time or another. Any number of actions or behaviours can cause people to be detained. Showing religious devotion, traveling to certain countries, or installing outlawed cellphone apps are just some of the reasons.

**Torture and trauma**

Some Uyghurs in the camps have been forcibly injected with unknown substances, said former detainees interviewed for the study. They described being beaten with electrical batons or being subjected to water torture. They said starving detainees are made to sing patriotic songs until hoarse and are severely punished for trying to pray or for speaking their own language. No visitors or lawyers are allowed, and some women in the camps have been **sterilized** against their will.

“A hundred times over I thought, when the footfalls of guards woke us in the night, that our time had come to be executed,” wrote one woman who spent nearly two years in detention.

**The Chinese response**

For their part, Chinese officials vehemently rejected the OHCHR’s findings. They even tried to suppress its publication.

“We all know so well that the so-called Xinjiang issue is a completely fabricated lie out of political motivations,” China’s UN ambassador, Zhang Jun said. “Its purpose is definitely to undermine China’s stability and to obstruct China’s development.”

In a 122-page report of its own, the Chinese government insisted that residents of Xinjiang enjoy “social stability, economic development, cultural prosperity, and religious freedom” and that “[p]eople of all ethnic groups are living a happy life in peace and contentment.”

**‘Job retraining’ camps?**

At one point, Chinese officials altogether denied the existence of the huge Uyghur detention sites. Next, they said that the centres were simply places for lessons on Chinese history, language, and culture where people got “nutritious, free diets” and “job retraining.”

Another time, they claimed that the camps were all part of a move to curb terrorism. They argued that Uyghur religious **extremists** and separatists had been plotting to set off bombs and to sow other forms of sabotage and unrest. However, observers say such threats have been exaggerated to justify the **repression** and **assimilation** of the Uyghurs.

Now, Chinese authorities say that several of the camps were shut down in 2019. But analysts have evidence that Uyghurs are still being rounded up, and the UN report noted that a large number of new facilities with high levels of security have been built in the area over the past several years.

**Severe restrictions**

Meanwhile, residents who aren’t detained are subjected to other forms of tyranny, including mass surveillance. For instance, they have been forced to submit to facial recognition technology. Authorities have also put bar codes on doors so they can keep track of where people are at all times. Police, who witnesses say are everywhere, check people’s phones to see who they are talking to and what they are saying.

**The report’s impact**

The OHCHR made a series of recommendations to the Chinese government in the report. Among them? The people who are being held without just cause should be released. Officials should reveal the whereabouts of missing persons. Surveillance practices that violate basic rights and freedoms need to end.

The report also urges the UN and the world to keep a sharp focus on the treatment of the Uyghurs. The Canadian government has pledged to do just that.

"We will continue to work with our international partners… to address the situation in Xinjiang and to ensure the Chinese government is held to account for its actions," read a statement by Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly.

**A stepping stone**

It's hard to predict what effect the OHCHR report will really have. The document alone can't bring legal action against China, and it is unlikely that it will prompt the Chinese government to change course, since officials insist that they have done nothing wrong. Still, observers say the report is a step in the right direction. They're hopeful that this official UN document could serve as a wake-up call to the world.

‘’Now that the leading UN office on human rights has spoken, there are no more excuses for failure to hold the Chinese government accountable,” said Elfidar Iltebir, Uyghur American Association president.

**The Uyghurs of Xinjiang**

Most Uyghurs speak a language similar to Turkish. They highly value their culture and generally practice a moderate form of the Sunni branch of Islam. About 95 percent of the global Uyghur population lives in China’s Xinjiang region in the country’s northwest, an area that became part of China in 1949. In theory the region is **autonomous**. In practice, the Chinese government controls it.

There are also established Uyghur communities in countries neighbouring China, such as Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan. In the 1990s, after the collapse of the **Soviet Union**, many of these countries became independent Muslim states. Some Uyghurs who witnessed this change tried to start their own **separatist** movement in Xinjiang. However, the Chinese government clamped down on these efforts and activists went underground.

Xinjiang is located along the old **Silk Road** route. It had an economy traditionally based on agriculture and trade. But development is thriving in the oil- and resource‑rich region, bringing an influx of **Han Chinese** from the nation’s eastern provinces. That has fueled ethnic tensions. Today, Han Chinese account for about 40 percent of the 26 million people who live in Xinjiang. They are perceived to get the best jobs, a source of resentment among long-standing Uyghur residents.

**assimilation:** the process of becoming a part of a country rather than remaining a separate group

**autonomous:** existing or acting separately

**crime against humanity**: a deliberate act, typically as part of a systematic campaign, that causes human suffering or death on a large scale

**extremist:** a person who holds and may act on extreme political or religious beliefs that are not normal, reasonable, or acceptable to most people

**genocide:** the killing of a large number of people from a particular nation or ethnic group

**Han Chinese:** the majority ethnic group in China

**Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR):** a department of the United Nations that works to promote and protect human rights that are guaranteed under international law

**repression:** the act of using force to control a group of people and limit their freedom

**separatist:** a group that wants to form a new country

**Silk Road:** an ancient trade route from China to the Mediterranean Sea

**Soviet Union:** a former country of Europe and Asia that existed from 1922 to 1991

**sterilize:** to make a person or an animal unable to have babies, especially by removing or blocking their sex organs

**Comprehension Questions**

1. Describe who the Uyghurs are and where they live.

2. What is the population of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region? What is the ethnic breakdown of this region?

3. List at least four other important facts about this region.

4. What is the **OHCHR**?

5. What report did this organization release on August 31? How long did it take to prepare this report?

6. According to various human rights organizations, where have Chinese authorities sent many Uyghurs? How many Uyghurs have been locked up in these facilities?

7. How did China react to the OHCHR report?

8. How has China described Uyghur detention sites?

**Questions For Further Thought**

1. Though many world leaders are applauding the publication of the OHCHR report, some observers are skeptical that any legal action will be taken against the Chinese government for its persecution of Uyghurs. As you see it, what historical impact will the publication of this report have? Give reasons to support your thinking.

2. Canada has been vocal in denouncing China for its human rights abuses against Uyghurs. There are approximately 2000 Uyghurs living in Canada who are still being persecuted from China, mainly through pressure put on their parents and families back at home. Watch this report from 2019 and hear Uyghur Canadians share how they are still being tracked by the Chinese government: **https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/1648929347691** [2:49]

How might Canada's public comments about China's human rights abuses impact Uyghur Canadians and their families? As you see it, should they continue to speak out? Why or why not?

3. Canada led the global push for the UN to investigate China's persecution of Uyghurs living in Xinjiang back in 2021. China, in response to Canada’s comments, cited examples of Canada’s human rights abuses against Indigenous populations following the discovery of hundreds of unmarked graves at former Residential Schools:

**https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/china-canada-un-calls-investigation-crimes-indigenous-uyghurs-1.6075025**

What similarities and differences exist between the two situations? If you were Prime Minister Trudeau, how would you respond to China’s comments? Explain.

4. You might recall that Canada was among a number of countries that imposed a diplomatic boycott of the 2022 Winter Olympic Games in Beijing to protest China's mistreatment of Uyghurs. Basically, athletes from these countries were allowed to compete, but no leaders or diplomats attended the Opening or Closing ceremonies. China denied these international accusations and responded by having a Uyghur athlete light the Olympic torch during the Opening ceremonies to show the world that it was not persecuting Uyghurs.

Do you think that such symbolic actions from the international community are effective? Why or why not? Explain.

**Questions For Online Exploration**

*Note:* The links below are listed at **www.lesplan.com/links** for easy access*.*

1. Learn more about the details in the OHCHR's report on the persecution of Uyghurs in China's Xinjiang province.

a) The full 48-page report:   
**https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/2022-08-31/22-08-31-final-assesment.pdf**

b) Report summary: **https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/08/1125932**

What questions do you have about the information presented?

2. How is the world reacting to the allegations in this report? Watch and read these news reports to find out more:  
**https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2067998275815** [5:43]  
**https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2068261955727** [7:50]  
**https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/us-china-uyghur-report-1.6570340**  
**https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2068181571858/** [7:58]

What new details did you learn?

3. Scroll through the 30 articles of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights:  
**https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights**

Based on what you've learned from the article and OHCHR's report, do you believe that China violated any of the 30 Human Rights articles? Give examples to support your response.

4. Listen to this podcast to learn what this UN report means to a woman whose Uyghur brother 'disappeared' in 2016:  
**https://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/as-it-happens-the-thursday-edition-1.6569818/what-the-un-uyghur-report-means-to-a-woman-whose-brother-was-disappeared-1.6569855** [8:24]

5. See the design of these detention camps, leaked photos of conditions inside them, and the surveillance systems used to monitor undetained Uyghurs: ***[Warning: Some images may be disturbing to students.]***  
**https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/meghara/inside-xinjiang-detention-camp  
https://xinjiang.sppga.ubc.ca/files/2020/08/china-reeducation-camps-DIAGRAM-06082020-scaled.jpg  
https://www.cbc.ca/radio/day6/the-onion-s-powerful-satire-on-shootings-amber-heard-s-trial-by-tiktok-stranger-things-is-back-and-more-1.6468079/leaked-photos-of-uyghurs-interned-at-xinjiang-detention-centres-devastating-says-activist-1.6468085**

What did you notice? What did you wonder?

6. Should Canada be tougher on China for the Chinese government's treatment of Uyghurs? Hear from one activist:  
**https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2040316483965** [7:50]

7. Learn more about Uyghur history and culture: **https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uyghurs**

List 3 facts that you learned.

**Putting It All Together**

**A. Write the letter that corresponds to the best answer on the line beside each question:**

\_\_\_\_\_\_ 1**. How many Uyghurs live in Xinjiang?** a) 4 million b) 8 million  
 c) 12 million d) 22 million  
 e) 47 million

\_\_\_\_\_\_ 2**. Xinjiang’s traditional economy is based on:** a) oil and gas resources b) high tech and movie production  
 c) mining and forestry d) fishing and aquaculture  
 e) agriculture and trade

\_\_\_\_\_\_ 3. **Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ a) Human Rights b) Civil Liberties  
 c) Constitutional Rights d) Religious Freedom  
 e) Freedom of Speech

**B.** Mark the statements **T (True)** or **F (False)**. If a statement is **True**, write one important fact to support it on the line below. If a statement is **False**, write the words that make it true on the line below.

\_\_\_\_\_\_ 4. **True** or **False?** Most Uyghurs are Muslims.

\_\_\_\_\_\_ 5. **True** or **False?** China released all Uyghurs from detention camps after the UN released its report.

\_\_\_\_\_\_ 6. **True** or **False?** Human rights groups say Chinese authorities have imprisoned some one million Uyghurs.

**C. Fill in the blanks to complete each sentence.**

7. Uyghurs speak a language similar to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

8. The population of Xinjiang is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ million.

9. Many \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ have settled in Xinjiang in recent years. (2)

**D. Respond to the following question in paragraph form. *(Use a separate sheet of paper if necessary.)***

10. As you see it, what responsibility does the international community have to protest human rights abuses in other countries? Give reasons to support your response.

**Assessment Rubric**

This rubric may be helpful in providing students with formative, strength-based feedback and/or assessing students’ responses holistically. This easy-to-modify activity is included in the doc file which you can download from:   
**www.lesplan.com/subscribers**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Emerging** | **Developing** | **Proficient** | **Extending** |
| **Supports thinking** | Answers or reflections are brief and include obvious facts/details/ evidence. | Answers or reflections are general and supported with some relevant facts/details/evidence. | Answers or reflections are clearly supported with specific, relevant facts/details/evidence. | Answers or reflections are insightful and supported with specific, relevant facts/details/evidence. |
| **Shows understanding** | Responses show a basic understanding of the text, topic, issue or message. | Responses are thoughtful and show a general understanding of the text, topic, issue or message. | Responses are thoughtful and show a complete understanding of the text, topic, issue or message. | Responses are insightful and show a deep understanding the text, topic, issue or message. May synthesize ideas or explain the ‘so what’. |
| **Thinks  critically** | Makes straightforward connections or inferences. Focuses on retelling. | Makes logical connections to self (T:S) and/or background knowledge (T:S). Inferences are logical | Makes meaningful connections to self. Considers ideas between texts (T:T).  Inferences are plausible. | Makes powerful connections that go between texts and/or beyond the text (T:W).  Inferences are plausible and insightful. |

