

We Must Not Stand By: Persecution of China's Uighur Muslims

Jonathan Sacks

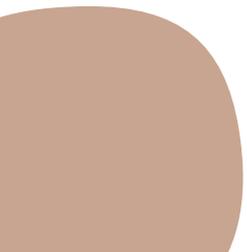
Summary

- Approximately 1 million Uighurs (ethnic minority group in China) are imprisoned in concentration camps where they are used as slaves, starved, mistreated and spend hours a day renouncing their beliefs. Recent footage shows Uighurs heavily guarded and being sent into trains for concentration camps. Liu Xiaoming, a Chinese ambassador could not explain what he was seeing after given the footage.
- China forbids mothers having more than 2 children which is harshly enforced against Uighur women who are forced to get an abortion or sterilization. As a result, the birth rate in mostly Uighur populated regions fell more than 60%
- Sacks brings up that as a Jew and their history of concentration camps, it is horrifying to see that people in the 21st century are being wrongfully punished for their views on religion
- In 1971, People's Republic of China has reaffirmed their commitment in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In article 18, it talks about how *everyone* has the freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

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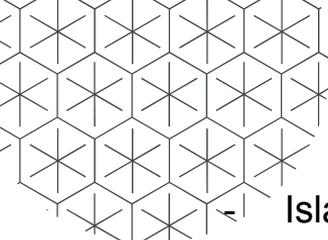


- Sacks says that this right is often lost when a group (usually the dominant one) sees another group as a threat to its freedom and dominance. “That threat becomes fear, fear becomes hate and hate becomes dehumanization”. When there is dehumanization, evil will follow.
- Sacks proceeds by bringing up cases in 1930s (Jews and Nazis) and 1990s (Hutus and Tutsis) where most of the world stood quietly watching whereas there were also a few people protesting and putting their lives in danger to protect others.
- Today, dehumanization is happening in China to the Uighur population but this time, we can't stay silent and allow this to happen.



Why does this matter?

How would you feel if one day, you're taken from your friends and family into this uncomfortable place where you're starved, used for labour and are forced to give up your valued religion? The sole purpose of these concentration camps is to stop the Islam religion which is atrocious and unhumanly. Uighur men would be imprisoned and women would be forced to get an abortion or birth control if they have too many kids. People should get the right on what to do with their bodies but the sole purpose of this is to prevent more people from following the Islam religion. It's a human rights violation on which everyone should get the freedom of thought, conscience and religion. It's like what happened to the Indigenous Residential Schools and the 1930s concentration camps. We must do our best to stop this.



Islamophobia in China

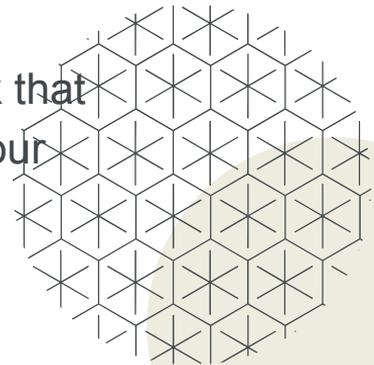
Islamophobia is described as the “dislike of or prejudice against Islam or Muslims, especially as a political force,” Oxford dictionaries.

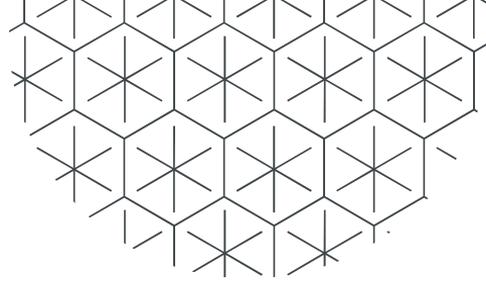
- Muslims are generally stereotyped as hostile outsiders due to events such as 9/11 in China.
- One states in the article that the lack of diversity education and understanding and appreciating other cultures is hugely absent from China’s education system
- CCP has taken action on Muslims by bulldozing Mosques, removing Arabic scripts from storefronts and restaurants and closing Islamic bookstores in hopes of sinicize Islam.
- About 200 Chinese people were killed in 2009 and many Uighurs were detained as suspects. There were a few stabbings and unfortunate events that followed until in 2013, Xinjiang launched “a year long campaign against terrorism.”
- China has often blamed ETIM (East Turkestan Islamic Movement) or people inspired by ETIM for violent incidents that occurred in Xinjiang.

China shouldn’t blame the entire Islamic population for crimes that were committed from a few of them. It reminds me of my friend saying that the concentration camps that the Government created made the rest of the Chinese people look bad even though we weren’t a part of it.

What Can We Do?

- Spread the news to your friends and family since not that many people know what's going on. The more people that know, the more we can make a change with our voices.
- Donate. There are many campaigns helping Uighurs who have managed to flee to Turkey by providing them food, housing and education.
- Don't stay silent. If you can, try going to protests or at least try posting on your social media account to inform others on what's happening.
- Write to your local MP and political representatives and ask that they bring this issue to the Government's attention so that our Government can also help.





Discussion Questions



Why might there be less attention to what's happening to Uighurs compared to BLM?

Ciara: I don't think there is as much attention in Canada since the concentration camps are taking place in China, a place very far from here, whereas there's racism in our country. Maybe there are protests happening in China since the Government might actually listen to their citizens. As a Chinese and hearing stories from my family, I think that generally people in China are scared of their Government. For example, the Covid lockdown in China is very different from Canada. We have rules to stay in our house yet almost everyone still goes out. However in China, there isn't a single person on the streets or else there would be punishments including jail time. I think that Chinese people are scared to go out to protest especially during Covid times in case of punishments. Also, China has their own forms of social media such as WeChat which I think are monitored by the Government so that might prevent people from speaking out.

Parithy: I think that the Chinese government is hiding as much as possible. For George Floyd, we had a whole protest and stuff which was definitely needed because of video proof and because it happened on the streets but Uighurs are being detained. The remaining Uighurs who are left out are scared of what's going to happen if their story gets on social media and then they and the rest of the Uighur population in China will also be detained just like their family and friends. Adding on to Ciara, if Uighurs attend protests just like how some black people attended BLM protests, there will be a risk that the Government shows up just like how they were tear gassing US citizens but they would instead send them to concentration camps.

Continued

Kenisha: I believe it has something to do with double standards but I'm not too sure. I feel as if most people don't spread awareness about the Muslim community in general and generalize it as "not a problem". As many believe that Islam is a hoax of some sort and fail to understand how precious it is to those of the Islamic faith. Even at school we fail to learn about how unfair Muslims have been treated but at least for my school, we recognize that the Indigenous and black community hasn't been treated fairly.

Roxana: I think maybe because BLM affects a bigger population of people since Uighurs are very hard to come by but people of colour are everywhere around us. Like we can actually see what's happening to them in our everyday lives and being constantly reminded but Uighurs and concentration camps are on the other side of the world and information is so limited. BLM is fuelled every time a new hate act is committed against people of colour, which appears on the news pretty often, but Uighurs and concentration camps is just a fact. There's no new information being posted about them, we just know it's happening so the momentum of the movement starts to die off.

It's been a year since we've heard and started protesting against concentration camps. Why hasn't there been any changes made?

Kenisha: Mainly the government or political figures refuse to take action, although some may promise to take action. I think that once we realize that these concentration camps in China are a problem, the political candidates will actually make a plan to help out if enough people are concerned and ask them to. Although I haven't heard the Chinese Government say something or make promises because I haven't done my research on them

Ciara: Yes I agree with Kenisha about the Canadian Government thing. I would also like to add that the Chinese Government doesn't care about us since we don't live in their country just as a presidential candidate won't go looking in China for votes. I don't even think they care about their own citizens or recognize that these concentration camps are a problem. Also I'm not completely sure but I don't think there are enough or any protests in China in order for them to get involved.

Parithy: Probably since not much has happened. I think that as soon as they kill one person everyone will start to protest and the Government would probably send military over there to help out. It also hasn't been in the media yet and not enough people are protesting in order to make a change.

Roxana: I'm not entirely sure about this one but maybe because it's not the right people or places protesting? Like there were protests in Indonesia by Uighur people themselves but its not reaching the place where the concentration camps are actually happening. We don't really have the power to do anything because we're on the other side of the world. So the movement isn't strong enough in the place where it needs to be.

Why do you think that our Government hasn't done anything to help out yet?

Ciara: I honestly have no idea. I think it might be because we don't have a close relationship with China like we do with the United States. China is a very isolated yet powerful country so it would be hard reaching there and getting our citizens involved in helping without the Chinese military attacking us. Another reason might be that they are not aware of this problem but I think that would be unlikely since it's been all over social media for a period of time.

Parithy: Yeah, I completely agree. I was also going to say that they don't know about this situation since not many news outlets have reported this yet.

Kenisha: I think they just refuse to take action. Maybe with the Covid pandemic, they might be too busy trying to keep us safe rather than to interfere with another situation. It's also pretty far for them to go help out.

Parithy added: I agree with the Covid pandemic thing too. Maybe it's also because we don't have much footage of inside the concentration camps so we don't know what to send to help out.

Roxana: Probably because they don't really have the resources to and if they step up against the Government in China about the concentration camps it might affect their relationship. Well money is obviously more important for our Government and they get most of their imported goods from there because it's cheaper to produce.

References

6 ways you can help uighurs

Islamophobia in China

BBC (Islamophobia)

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