



## The UK's Response to International Human Rights Abuses

For decades, major powers have flouted international law with impunity and shielded their allies from accountability. The result is conflicts and crises rife with human rights violations in every corner of the world and unprecedented threats to the international rules-based system, multilateralism and open societies. It is no coincidence that unprecedented attacks on civic space and human rights defenders (HRDs) are taking place against a backdrop of rising authoritarianism and growing attacks on the international rules-based system. HRDs are the canaries in the coal mine: attacks against them foretell increasingly repressive and regressive policies and practices. They are also the most important partners for exposing and opposing those policies and practices. [Amnesty International is calling on the UK government to](#) adopt a principled foreign policy that acknowledges and responds to human rights violations in a consistent manner, wherever they take place.

- Consistently support international justice and accountability mechanisms for crimes under international law.
- Prioritise the promotion of civil society space worldwide, including freedom of expression, association and assembly and support for human rights defenders and journalists.

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### **ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES (OPT)**

2023 has seen a drastic deterioration of an already deeply concerning situation, with war crimes being committed by both sides.

#### CRISIS IN GAZA

**On 7 October 2023**, Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups launched an attack on Israel which violated international humanitarian law. The attacks displayed a chilling disregard for life by carrying out cruel and brutal crimes, including mass summary killings, hostage-taking, and launching indiscriminate rocket attacks into Israel. By 16 October, at least 1,200 people were killed and 3,436 injured in Israel.

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**As of 14 January 2024**, [23,968](#) Palestinians have been killed in Gaza due to Israel's military actions along with 60,582 injured. The real number of fatalities is expected to be much higher, with families struggling to recover the bodies of loved ones from under the rubble.

As part of its ongoing investigation into violations of the laws of war, Amnesty International has documented evidence of [unlawful Israeli strikes](#), including two illustrative cases in which Israeli strikes killed 46 civilians, including 20 children:

1. **19 October** - an Israeli air strike in the compound of the Saint Porphyrius Greek Orthodox Church where approximately 450 internally displaced members of Gaza's small Christian community were sheltering. **The strike killed 18 civilians and injured at least 12 others.** oldest victim was an 80-year-old woman and the youngest was a three-month-old baby.
2. **20 October** - an Israeli strike against houses in the al-Nuserirat refugee camp. **28 civilians – including 12 children – were killed.**

Based on its in-depth investigation of these events, Amnesty International has determined that the strikes were indiscriminate attacks or direct attacks on civilians or civilian objects, and must be investigated as war crimes.

**Since 2007**, Israel has imposed an air, land and sea blockade on the Gaza Strip collectively punishing its entire population. Amnesty International is calling on the Israeli authorities to immediately suspend all increased restrictions which have recently been imposed and to lift its illegal 16-year blockade on the occupied Gaza Strip. As the occupying power, Israel has a clear obligation under international law to ensure the basic needs of Gaza's civilian population are met.

#### *International Action – Calls for Ceasefire*

The staggering death toll and extreme devastation and destruction in Gaza underlines the urgent need for an immediate and enduring ceasefire by all parties. This is vital to enable aid agencies to get sufficient relief into the occupied Gaza Strip, and to distribute it safely and unconditionally. It would give hospitals and clinics an opportunity to receive life-saving medicines, collect the little fuel still available locally, and water and equipment they desperately need as well as to repair damaged wards and other critical infrastructure such as the water network.

An immediate and enduring ceasefire is also needed to secure the safe release and return of all civilian hostages who are at further risk, protection of civilians in Israel who are also exposed to harm as a result of the firing of indiscriminate rockets from Gaza, and to enable independent investigations into war crimes and other human rights violations by the International Criminal Court and the UN Independent Commission of Inquiry.

#### *Arms Exports*

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The UK government exploits a loophole, set out in the 2002 “incorporation guidelines”<sup>1</sup>, to arm Israel by supplying components for US-made F-16 and F-35 fighter aircraft, in the full knowledge they’re being used in military action in Gaza.

There is a clear risk that arms and military equipment transferred to Israel will be used to facilitate or commit serious violations of international law, including attacks that may amount to war crimes. The UK government should therefore immediately suspend both extant licences for military equipment and technology and the issuing of new licences while Israel continues to carry out widespread serious violations including war crimes, with impunity. Failure to do so risks the UK government breaching its own laws and international obligations and being complicit in grave abuses.

### *Settlement Goods*

Israel’s policy and practice of settling its civilians in occupied Palestinian territory and displacing the local population violates the Fourth Geneva Convention, constitutes a war crime, and forms a key part of Israel’s system of apartheid rule over Palestinians. It has also resulted in grave human rights violations against Palestinians: forcible displacement, land confiscation, demolition of homes and structures, and discrimination.

The UK government has called on Israel to stop its settlement expansion. However, the UK is indirectly supporting settlement maintenance and expansion by allowing goods produced there into the UK market and allowing UK firms to conduct business with settlements.

The Foreign Secretary’s announcement that the UK will impose travel bans on settlers who commit acts of violence against Palestinians in the Occupied West Bank demonstrates belated recognition of the corrosive effect of Israeli state-backed settler violence in the occupied Palestinian Territories. However, by unilaterally targeting only a handful of violent settlers within the entire apparatus of state-backed repression in the Palestinian Territories, the UK is clearly failing to address the context. The UK should not divorce acts of settler violence from the whole state system of Israel’s illegal settlement expansion, its forcible transfers and its unlawful killings of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories.

### **Amnesty is calling on the UK Government do all in its power to secure:**

- An immediate ceasefire by all parties to the conflict in Israel and Gaza.
- The end of Israel’s 16-year-long illegal blockade on Gaza, starting by immediately suspending its recent increased restrictions on food, fuel, electricity and water, which is collective punishment amounting to a war crime.
- The release of all civilian hostages held in Gaza and Palestinians arbitrarily detained by Israel.

### **The UK government should also:**

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<sup>1</sup> The guidelines allow the UK to supply components to an intermediate country if that country is an ally and has a recognised export control system, even if that country then exports that item to destinations the UK would not approve sales to directly.

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- Continue to call on Palestinian armed groups to immediately refrain from firing indiscriminate rockets into Israel.
- Suspend the supply of arms to the Israeli authorities given that serious violations amounting to crimes under international law are being committed.
- Commit support to international accountability measures, including financial and other resources to the International Criminal Court (ICC) investigation into the situation in Palestine, and call for the investigation to be expedited.
- Call on the Israeli authorities to dismantle the system of apartheid imposed on all Palestinians.
- Ban the importation of goods from illegal Israeli settlements.

## MYANMAR

### AIRSTRIKES

Three years on since the Myanmar military coup d'état on 1 February 2021, the suffering of civilians across Myanmar shows no signs of easing. The Myanmar military has committed widespread human rights violations, including war crimes and possible crimes against humanity and increasingly relied on air strikes to attack the civilian population and continuing to restrict the delivery of humanitarian aid.

In 2022 Amnesty International and others [exposed the supply chain of aviation fuel](#) used by the Myanmar military to carry out unlawful air strikes. Amnesty International documented 16 unlawful air attacks that took place between March 2021 and August 2022 in Kayah, Kayin and Chin States, as well as in Sagaing Region, finding:

- The attacks covered in the report **killed at least 15 civilians and injured at least 36 other civilians**. In the vast majority of the cases, **only civilians** appear to have been present at the location of the strike at the time of the attack.
- **destroyed civilian objects** including homes, religious buildings, schools, medical facilities and a camp for displaced persons.

### ROHINGYA COMMUNITY

Crisis and conflict has persisted in Myanmar for decades. In 2017, more than 700,000 Rohingya Muslims fled Rakhine State when the Myanmar security forces launched a targeted campaign of widespread and systematic murder, rape and burning of homes. The violence followed decades of state-sponsored discrimination, persecution, and oppression against the Rohingya that amounts to the crime against humanity of [apartheid](#).

**6 years later**, there are nearly 1-million Rohingya people living in refugee camps in Bangladesh and estimated 150,000 Rohingya people are internally displaced within Rakhine State in Myanmar<sup>2</sup>. They are denied the right to a nationality and forced to endure dehumanizing living conditions while living under an institutionalized system of discrimination, oppression and domination. **On 8 June 2023**, the Myanmar military

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<sup>2</sup> (As of 07 August 2023) See: UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Operational Data Portal: Refugee Situation: Bangladesh, [data.unhcr.org/en/country/bgd](https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/bgd); UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Operational Data Portal: Country Review: Myanmar, [data.unhcr.org/en/country/mmr](https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/mmr)

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suspended humanitarian access in Rakhine State, thereby completely preventing humanitarian organizations' operations in the area. **Governments in the region and the rest of the international community need to effectively and promptly step up their efforts to protect the human rights of Rohingya refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons (IDPs).**<sup>3</sup>

#### THE UK'S RESPONSE

In January 2023, the [UK government announced sanctions](#), targeting two Myanmar companies identified as playing an essential role in importing, handling and transporting aviation fuel to the Myanmar military's air force. While the companies were key players in the aviation fuel industry in Myanmar the modus operandi of aviation fuel supply to the Myanmar military is changing and new measures are needed to halt the supply.<sup>4</sup>

In regards to Rohingya communities, the UK Government has [recently pledged](#):

- £7 million worth of humanitarian aid will provide essential food and cooking fuel for Rohingya refugees living in camps in Bangladesh as well as support for affected communities in Myanmar to access clean water, food, and shelter.

Through this support, the UK should work with the Governments of Bangladesh and other destination and transit countries for the Rohingya and other refugees from Myanmar, to continue supporting their humanitarian efforts and ensure that refugee rights are respected, in line with [Amnesty International's recommendations](#).

In the recent pledge, the UK stated that it will also continue to advocate for the rights of the Rohingya and to hold the perpetrators of the atrocities against them to account. This follows the [Intervention on 15 November 2023 by UK and partners](#) in The Gambia v Myanmar International Court of Justice case, which they described as reaffirming their commitment 'to accountability and the international legal order'.

## NIGERIA

### OVERVIEW

Nigeria's human rights situation is characterized by serious and widespread violations by state actors and abuses by non-state actors. There is a lack of accountability for these violations and abuses, which range from restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression to extrajudicial killings to environmental pollution.<sup>5</sup> The administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu needs to urgently address these widespread and repeated human rights violations and abuses in Nigeria, having failed to do so in the initial first months in office.

### The human rights situation on the ground<sup>6</sup>:

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<sup>3</sup> See the public statement for further detail on human rights violations of the Rohingya community and the calls on regional and international governments:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa16/7142/2023/en/>

<sup>4</sup> Amnesty International will be publishing new analysis on 31 January 2024, with updated recommendations to the UK Government.

<sup>5</sup> Amnesty International Report 2022/3: The state of the world's human rights, 27 March 2023,

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol10/5670/2023/en/> [Accessed 14 July 2023]

<sup>6</sup> Same as above, see pages 276-279

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- **Restrictions to the freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.**  
*Journalists and digital activists continue to face harassment, threats, and attacks from state authorities for peacefully expressing critical opinions. During the 2023 general elections, 42 journalists suffered attacks and harassment, including being beaten and denied access to information, while covering the elections.<sup>7</sup>*
- **Forced evictions.**  
*Forced evictions have continued unabated in Nigeria since its last UPR, without adequate notice or consultation. In February 2022, Rivers state authorities forcibly evicted 60,000 residents of waterfront communities from their homes in Diobu, Port Harcourt.*
- **Violence against women and girls.**  
*Since its last UPR, there has been an upsurge in reports of rape across Nigeria. The Nigeria police recorded 717 incidents of rape between January and May 2020. In its 2020 annual report, the National Human Rights Commission noted having received 11,200 reported cases of rape.*
- **Human rights violations in armed conflict.**  
*Nigeria has failed in its responsibility to protect people from various abuses committed by Boko Haram and Islamic States West African Province (ISWAP) as well as unknown gunmen; who killed at least 6,907 people, abducted 6,157, and forcibly transferred or internally displaced at least 2,000 in 2022.*
- **Communal violence.**  
*Violent clashes between members of farmer communities and members of herder communities in parts of Nigeria over access to water, land, and pasture have remained unaddressed. In Benue state, herder–farmer conflicts remain common, leading to the killing of thousands of people.*
- **Rights of LGBTI people.**  
*Human rights violations continue to be committed against people suspected of engaging in same-sex relations or for having a non-conventional gender identity, including arrest, public shaming, extortion, and discrimination. In June 2022, three gay men; Abdullahi Beti, Kamilu Ya'u, and Mallam Haruna were detained under the Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act 2013. A Sharia Court in Ningi, Bauchi state sentenced them to death.*
- **The impact of the oil industry.**  
*Despite supporting recommendations to take effective measures to assist the communities suffering from environmental damage across the Niger Delta due to oil spills, the Niger Delta region continues to suffer from an epidemic of oil spills which have devastating impacts on the human rights and livelihoods of the communities.*
- **Enforced disappearances, unlawful killings, and unlawful detention.**  
*Nigerian prisons remain congested, with about 69% of inmates awaiting trial - some for over five years. On 2 December 2021, five awaiting trial inmates were killed, and seven others injured after being electrocuted at the Ikoyi Correctional Centre Lagos*
- **Death penalty.**  
*Although no judicial executions are known to have been carried out since 23 December 2016, authorities in Nigeria are resorting to imposing the death penalty as a quick fix to insecurity and violent crime. Twenty-six states have laws prescribing the death penalty*

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/02/nigeria-authorities-must-uphold-human-rights-ahead-of-elections/>

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for kidnapping and other crimes. As of 8 May 2023, 3,322 people were known to be under sentence of death.<sup>8</sup>

Further information on the wider range of issues referenced above can be found in Amnesty International's most recent research report '[Nigeria: Human Rights Agenda 2023](#)' and [submission to the 45<sup>th</sup> session of the UPR Working Group, January-February 2024](#).

## INDIA

### HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Amnesty International has [documented](#) the continued repression of rights in Jammu & Kashmir since the change in status of the region in 2019. In this time, Amnesty called for the Indian government to end the use of unlawful measures and unjust barriers impeding the exercise of various human rights in the region.

As such, Aakar Patel (chair of board at Amnesty International India) welcomed the recent decision on 11 December 2023, in which a Constitution Bench unanimously [upheld](#) the 2019 decision of the central government to abrogate Article 370 of the Indian Constitution – a decision that provides hope in restoring the inclusion of Kashmiri voices.

The ruling also:

- ordered the restoration of statehood of Jammu and Kashmir as soon as possible and proceeded to order the Election Commission of India to hold elections to the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly by 30 September 2024.
- recommended “the setting up of an impartial [Truth and Reconciliation committee](#) to investigate and report on the violations of human rights” both by state and non-state actors at least since the 1980s and “measures for reconciliation”.

*The Human Rights Violations Documented from 2019*

#### Assault on Freedom of Expression

- *To repress dissent, the Indian government severely restricted the right to freedom of opinion and expression of the people of Jammu & Kashmir. Journalists and human rights activists reported to Amnesty International experiencing incessant campaigns of intimidation and harassment by the government in the region.<sup>9</sup>*
- *On 4 August 2019, a day before the revocation of Article 370, a blanket internet shutdown was imposed in Jammu & Kashmir.<sup>10</sup> The blanket internet shutdown impeded the ability of HRDs and others to report on violations and communicate about the situation in the region to the outside world. It was only lifted progressively and completely in February 2021 - 18 months after it was imposed.*

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<sup>8</sup> Amnesty International Nigeria, Not A Quick Fix to Insecurity: The Death Penalty as An Ineffective Deterrent To Crime, AFR 44/6354/2023 <https://www.amnesty.org.ng/2023/05/16/nigeria-not-a-quick-fix-to-insecurity/>

<sup>9</sup> Amnesty International interviews: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa20/5959/2022/en/>

<sup>10</sup> Access Now, The Return of Digital Authoritarianism, 24 May 2022, <https://www.accessnow.org/cms/assets/uploads/2022/05/2021-KIO-Report-May-24-2022.pdf>

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## Arbitrary Detention

- **Since 5 August 2019**, Indian authorities increased the use of the draconian 1978 Jammu & Kashmir Public Safety Act (PSA) which allowed them to arbitrarily detain people for up to two years without charge or trial.
- In the absence of any publicly available or disaggregated data on the use of administrative and pre-trial detention in Jammu & Kashmir, Amnesty International reviewed 1346 cases available on the website of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. It found that as of 1 August 2022, the number of habeas corpus petitions has increased by 32% in Jammu & Kashmir, indicating an increase in allegations of unlawful detention.
- The Press Council of India in its fact-finding report said that at least 49 journalists have been arrested in the region since 2016 of which eight had been arrested under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) – India’s primary anti-terror law.
- According to media reports, outspoken journalists **including Aasif Sultan, Fahad Shah, Peerzada Aashiq, Masrat Zahra, Gowhar Geelani, Kamran Yousuf, Abdul Aala Fazili and Manan Gulzar Dar** were charged, arrested or detained under UAPA besides other provisions of the Indian Penal Code for their documentation of human rights abuses in Jammu & Kashmir.

## Unlawful Killings

- **In July 2022**, the Indian Government revealed that Jammu & Kashmir accounted for the highest number of police involved deaths, known in India as ‘police encounters’ in the country between April 2020 and March 2022.<sup>11</sup> The culture of impunity in relation to state killings in Jammu & Kashmir sits within a broader lack of accountability for police use of force in the region.
- **In July 2020**, security personnel killed three people in Shopian district of Kashmir claiming them to be ‘terrorists’.<sup>12</sup> Two months later, they were identified as residents of Rajouri district in Jammu who had come to Kashmir for work, after the family of the three persons filed a missing complaint with the police.<sup>13</sup> Despite an admission of wrongdoing, the central government did not grant sanction to prosecute the accused army officer in a civil court. Instead, the accused army officer is being tried in a military court. Military courts suffer from particular structural flaws related to their competence, independence and impartiality, which render them unsuitable for prosecuting human rights violations.

## Demolitions as Potential Forced Evictions

- **Between the 04 and 05 February 2023**, the district municipal corporation and state revenue authorities, in collaboration with the police, demolished the homes and

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<sup>11</sup> Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1459, 26 July 2022, <http://164.100.24.220/loksabhaquestions/annex/179/AU1459.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Week, “3 militants killed in encounter with security forces in J-K”, 18 July 2020, <https://www.theweek.in/wire-updates/national/2020/07/18/del2-jk-encounter.html>

<sup>13</sup> Washington Post, “Indian military admits wrongdoing in 3 Kashmir killings”, 18 September 2020, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/indian-military-admits-wrongdoing-in-3-kashmir-killings/2020/09/18/94c387c6-f9c3-11ea-85f7-5941188a98cd\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/indian-military-admits-wrongdoing-in-3-kashmir-killings/2020/09/18/94c387c6-f9c3-11ea-85f7-5941188a98cd_story.html)

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*properties of residents in at least in four districts of Srinagar, Budgam, Anantnag and Baramulla in Jammu and Kashmir.*

- *According to media reports, several residents allege that they did not receive any prior notices from the administration. Many of them also allege that they had documents proving ownership of their properties, but the authorities did not give them an opportunity to present their claims before running bulldozers over their homes.<sup>14</sup>*
- *Concerningly, it was UK construction equipment giant JCB's bulldozers being used in house demolitions in Jammu and Kashmir. Amnesty International UK's Economic Affairs Director, [Peter Frankental](#), said: "If JCB fails to act over Kashmir it would be another example of the company falling short of its obligation to conduct proper human rights due diligence over how its machines are being used around the world."*

## THE UK'S RESPONSE

The UK should raise the importance of addressing human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir with the Indian Authorities and urge them to meaningfully follow up on the recent Supreme Court Decision, not least of all in regard to establishing a transparent, consultative and impartial Truth and Reconciliation committee with a strong legal foundation, plus funding and powers that are consistent with international law and standards.

## CHINA

### Universal Periodic Review

Ahead of China's UPR in January-February 2024. [Amnesty International's submission](#) described the human rights situation in the People's Republic of China as 'at a new low'. The submission raises concerns in regard to a number of areas including: human rights defenders, freedom of expression, arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment, unfair trial, and extraterritorial obligations.

In relation to the situation in Xinjiang, the following recommendations were made to China:

- Without further delay and with technical assistance from the OHCHR and other relevant international organizations, set up procedures to provide information at the request of relatives or legal representatives at home or abroad on the status and whereabouts of relatives of the Uyghur community abroad who were detained by the authorities and are believed to be held in camps or prison facilities in Xinjiang.
- Immediately allow UN human rights experts, as well as independent observers, including human rights investigators and journalists, unfettered access to the country, including to internment camps and prisons in Xinjiang and Tibet.
- As previously recommended, immediately release all persons held in internment camps or other detention facilities – including prisons – in Xinjiang, unless there is sufficient credible and admissible evidence that they have committed an internationally recognizable offence, are transferred to recognized detention facilities, and are granted a fair trial in line with international standards.

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/02/india-demolitions-in-kashmir-must-be-immediately-halted-and-those-affected-compensated/>

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## THE UK'S RESPONSE

The UK has been a [critical voice](#) of the situation in Xinjiang, having made a number of public statements including through raising the situation at China's previous and ongoing UPRs. The UK has previously worked to secure a resolution at the Human Rights Council, which failed by a narrow margin, and since then has been working to try and increase the number of signatories. Going forward, the UK should pursue with renewed effort, an alternative path towards accountability through the Human Rights Council (HRC). It should work through the HRC to establish an independent international mechanism to investigate crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations in Xinjiang.

## HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS OF THE UYGHUR COMMUNITY

**Since 2017**, under the guise of a campaign against “terrorism” and “religious extremism”, the government of China has carried out widespread and systematic human rights violations against Muslims living in Xinjiang.

The Chinese government has gone to great lengths to cover up the human rights violations taking place in Xinjiang, and to prevent members of the Uyghur diaspora from speaking up about them. Amnesty International has documented numerous cases where Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other Turkic Muslim people in Xinjiang being detained simply for living, travelling, or studying abroad or for communicating with people abroad. Many have been detained simply for being “connected” with people who lived, travelled, studied, or communicated with people abroad. It is estimated that over a million people have been arbitrarily detained in internment camps throughout Xinjiang since 2017.

**In June 2021**, [a comprehensive report](#) by Amnesty International demonstrated that the systematic state-organized mass imprisonment, torture and persecution perpetrated by Chinese authorities amounted to crimes against humanity.

**In August 2022**, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [released a long-awaited report](#) reinforcing previous findings by Amnesty International and others.

**In October 2022**, Human Rights Council member states rejected by a narrow margin a resolution that would have called for a debate on the report – an initiative that already fell short of calls from 50 of the Council's own appointed experts (the Special Procedures) [for a special session on the issue.](#)

**On 12 December 2022**, [Kamile Wayit](#), a Uyghur university student, was detained by authorities and was sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment under the charge of “promoting extremism” after posting a video on WeChat about the November 2022 “A4 protests”.<sup>15</sup> Like many other Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other Muslim minorities in China, Kamile faces unequal and harsh treatment on the basis of her ethnic and religious identity.

Amnesty International continues to call on the Chinese authorities to immediately release all individuals, including those profiled in the [Free Xinjiang Detainees campaign](#), arbitrarily detained in camps or prisons, and end the persecution of Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other predominantly Muslim minorities in Xinjiang.

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<sup>15</sup>See Amnesty International's urgent action for Kamile's case:  
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa17/6967/2023/en/>

### AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL UK ADVOCACY OFFICE

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