

Submission to the U.S. Department of State Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons 2024 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report



VICTIMS OF COMMUNISM
MEMORIAL FOUNDATION™

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About the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation

The Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation is an educational, research, and human rights nonprofit devoted to commemorating the victims of communism around the world and to pursuing the freedom of those living under totalitarian regimes.¹ The Foundation was authorized in 1993 by a unanimous Act of Congress.

From 2019, the Foundation's China Studies department under the leadership of Dr. Adrian Zenz has published groundbreaking research uncovering Beijing's atrocities in Xinjiang.² This has included the earliest scholarly report on forced labor in Xinjiang in mid-2019, and the first research uncovering forced labor transfers of Uyghurs to pick cotton in December 2020.³ This work was instrumental for the development of the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA) and for the U.S. government ban on imports of Xinjiang cotton and tomatoes in January 2021.⁴

Submission Related to the People's Republic of China (PRC)'s Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR)

Background

From 2019, researchers have documented two major systems of forced labor targeting Uyghurs and other ethnic groups in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region XUAR⁵:

(1) forced labor linked to the region's re-education camps, known as Vocational Skills Education and Training Centers (VSETCs), in which detainees

¹ See Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation. (2024). *About*. <https://victimsofcommunism.org/about/>.

² See Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation. (2024). *China Studies - Adrian Zenz*.

<https://victimsofcommunism.org/leader/adrian-zenz-phd/>.

³ Zenz, A. (2020). *Coercive Labor in Xinjiang: Labor Transfer and the Mobilization of Ethnic Minorities to Pick Cotton*. Newlines Institute. <https://newlinesinstitute.org/china/coercive-labor-in-xinjiang-labor-transfer-and-the-mobilization-of-ethnic-minorities-to-pick-cotton/>.

⁴ Zenz, A. (2019). *Beyond the Camps: Beijing's Long-Term Scheme of Coercive Labor, Poverty Alleviation and Social Control in Xinjiang*. Written CECC testimony published in October 2019. <https://www.cecc.gov/sites/chinacommission.house.gov/files/documents/Beyond%20the%20Camps%20CECC%20testimony%20version%20%28Zenz%20Oct%202019%29.pdf>; Zenz, A. (2023). The Conceptual Evolution of Poverty Alleviation Through Labour Transfer in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. *Central Asian Survey*, 42(4), 649-673. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2023.2227225>.

⁵ Zenz, A. (2019). *Beyond the Camps*.

receive coerced skills training during internment and are then coercively placed into work⁶; and

(2) the separate so-called Poverty Alleviation Through Labor Transfer policy, which coercively trains and transfers non-detained rural surplus laborers from the primary (agricultural) sector into secondary or tertiary sector work.⁷ Labor transfers also include coerced seasonal transfers of surplus laborers into seasonal agricultural work, in particular the harvesting of agricultural produce such as cotton and tomatoes.⁸

Xinjiang's Poverty Alleviation Through Labor Transfer program is the coercive work policy that underpins most forced labor linked to the region. While VSETC-linked forced labor placements can be linked to the production of textiles, electronics, and a few other labor-intensive products, Poverty Alleviation Through Labor Transfer is the only forced labor policy implicated in the production of cotton, tomatoes and tomato products, peppers and seasonal agricultural products, seafood products, polysilicon production for solar panels, lithium for electric vehicle batteries, and aluminum for batteries, vehicle bodies, and wheels.⁹

In July 2022, the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery adopted this conceptual framing of Xinjiang's two distinct forced labor systems and affirmed the continued severity of state-imposed forced labor through poverty alleviation and labor transfers in both the XUAR and the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), stating that:

Two distinct State-mandated systems [of forced labor] exist: (a) the vocational skills education and training centre system, under which minorities are detained and subjected to work placements;

⁶ Zenz, A. (2023). Innovating penal labor: Reeducation, forced labor, and coercive social integration in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. *The China Journal*, 90. <https://doi.org/10.1086/725494>.

⁷ Zenz, A. (2021). *Coercive Labor and Forced Displacement in Xinjiang's Cross-Regional Labor Transfer Program*. The Jamestown Foundation. <https://jamestown.org/product/coercive-labor-and-forced-displacement-in-xinjiangs-cross-regional-labor-transfer-program/>; Zenz, A. (2023). The Conceptual Evolution of Poverty Alleviation Through Labour Transfer in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. *Central Asian Survey*, 42(4), 649-673. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2023.2227225>.

⁸ Zenz, A. (2020). *Coercive Labor in Xinjiang: Labor Transfer and the Mobilization of Ethnic Minorities to Pick Cotton*. Newlines Institute. <https://newlinesinstitute.org/china/coercive-labor-in-xinjiang-labor-transfer-and-the-mobilization-of-ethnic-minorities-to-pick-cotton/>; Zenz, A. (2023). Coercive Labor in the Cotton Harvest in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and Uzbekistan: A Comparative Analysis of State-Sponsored Forced Labor. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 56(2), 1–32. <https://doi.org/10.1525/cpcs.2023.1822939> (alternative free download at https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4439694); Murphy, L. T., et al. (2021) *Laundering cotton: How Xinjiang cotton is obscured in international supply chains*. Sheffield Hallam University. <https://www.shu.ac.uk/helena-kennedy-centre-international-justice/research-and-projects/all-projects/laundered-cotton>.

⁹ Zenz, A. (2020). *Coercive Labor in Xinjiang: Labor Transfer and the Mobilization of Ethnic Minorities to Pick Cotton*. Newlines Institute. <https://newlinesinstitute.org/china/coercive-labor-in-xinjiang-labor-transfer-and-the-mobilization-of-ethnic-minorities-to-pick-cotton/>; Zenz, A. (2023). Coercive Labor in the Cotton Harvest in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and Uzbekistan: A Comparative Analysis of State-Sponsored Forced Labor. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 56(2), 1–32. <https://doi.org/10.1525/cpcs.2023.1822939> (alternative free download at https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4439694); Halper, E. (2023, September 18). EV Makers' Use of Chinese Suppliers Raises Concerns about Forced Labor. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/interactive/2023/>; Swanson, A., & Buckley, C. (2021, January 8). Chinese Solar Companies Tied to Use of Forced Labor. *The New York Times*. <https://web.archive.org/web/20230424180048/>; Murphy, L., & Elimä, N. (2021). *In Broad Daylight: Uyghur Forced Labour and Global Solar Supply Chains*. Sheffield Hallam University. <https://www.shu.ac.uk/-/media/home/research/helena-kennedy-centre/projects/pdfs/>; Murphy, L., et al. *Driving Force*. Sheffield Hallam University. <https://www.shu.ac.uk/helena-kennedy-centre-international-justice/research-and-projects/all-projects/>; Urbina, I. (2023, October 9). The Uyghurs forced to process the world's fish. *The New Yorker*. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-uyghurs-forced-to-process-the-worlds-fish>.

and (b) the poverty alleviation through labour transfer system, where surplus rural labourers are transferred into secondary or tertiary sector work. Similar arrangements have also been identified in the Tibet Autonomous Region, where an extensive labour transfer programme has shifted mainly farmers, herders and other rural workers into low-skilled and low-paid employment (p.8).¹⁰

Poverty Alleviation Through Labor Transfer represents a non-internment state-imposed forced labor mobilization system. Such systems operating in the XUAR, the TAR¹¹, Uzbekistan (until 2021) and Turkmenistan share several core features.¹² In contrast to most forms of private (company-based) forced labor, these systems operate through a pervasively coercive social context — i.e. a police state — marked by a lack of civic freedoms and a state that generates powerful coercive pressures through an extensive grassroots bureaucracy. Non-cooperation entails a systemic risk that is often more implicit than overt. Non-internment state-imposed forced labor mobilization is not easily measured by the ILO’s set of 11 indicators, but can be imperfectly captured by the ILO’s 2012 Survey Guidelines, even though these were also primarily designed to capture private (company-based) forced labor.¹³

Since 2020 and especially under Xinjiang’s new party secretary Ma Xingrui, Xinjiang has been shifting away from former party secretary Chen Quanguo’s highly mobilizational, campaign-style labor transfers to a more normalized and institutionalized strategy that emphasizes maintaining labor placement achievements through intensified monitoring. By establishing “poverty prevention” and “Unemployment Monitoring and Early Warning” mechanisms, the state prevents people from returning to an unapproved state of low measurable income based on traditional livelihoods, including through abandoning state-arranged jobs. These mechanisms render less visible the forced labor created by the region’s Poverty Alleviation Through Labor Transfer policy.¹⁴

Current XUAR Policies and Work Plans Impacting the Period April 2023 to April 2024

For the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021 to 2025), the XUAR instituted intensified employment and training requirements for targeted rural populations. In 2021 and 2022, this resulted in increased annual transfer figures compared to the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016 to 2020): transfers reached a record 3.17 million person-times in 2021 before leveling off at above 3 million (3.03 million person-times) in 2022.¹⁵

¹⁰ Obokata, T. (2022) *Contemporary forms of slavery affecting persons belonging to ethnic, religious and linguistic minority communities*. United Nations General Assembly Human Rights Council. <https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FHRC%2F51%2F26&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False>.

¹¹ Zenz, A. (2020). Xinjiang’s System of Militarized Vocational Training Comes to Tibet. *China Brief*, 20(17). <https://jamestown.org/program/jamestown-early-warning-brief-xinjiangs-system-of-militarized-vocational-training-comes-to-tibet/>.

¹² Zenz, A. (2023). Measuring Non-Internment State-Imposed Forced Labor in Xinjiang and Central Asia: An Assessment of ILO Measurement Guidelines. *Journal of Human Trafficking*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2023.2270366>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ingram, R. (2023, October 26). *When ‘poverty alleviation’ means forced labor for Uyghurs*. The China Project. <https://thechinaproject.com/2023/10/26/when-poverty-alleviation-means-forced-labor-for-uyghurs/>

¹⁵ Transfer figures are not cumulative as surplus laborers are transferred annually. Figures are given as “person-times,” resulting from the fact that laborers can be transferred multiple times per year (the difference between “persons” and

From 2020/2021, Xinjiang established a poverty prevention and “Unemployment Monitoring and Early Warning” mechanism to actively prevent people from returning to an unapproved state of low measurable income (i.e., “poverty”). Xinjiang’s 13th Five-Year Poverty Alleviation Plan had first specified the creation of an “Unemployment Monitoring and Early Warning System” to ensure achievement of employment targets through a monitored retention of transferred workers.¹⁶ In 2021, Xinjiang sent 400,000 cadres to investigate and monitor the poverty and income situations of 12 million rural households through an “early prevention, early intervention, early assistance” campaign that identified 774,000 households for “real-time monitoring.”¹⁷

Xinjiang’s 14th Five-Year Plan for Employment Promotion (2021 to 2025) mandates, in the critical “guiding thought” section that outlines the plan’s core principles, that not just one person per household but “every single person who is able to work is to realize employment.”¹⁸ Governments at county and township levels must “comprehensively analyze the specific reasons for the decline in [a particular household’s] income,” and the first listed countermeasure is labor transfer. Xinjiang’s 14th Five-Year Plan for Socioeconomic Development (2021-25) reiterates these goals.¹⁹

In addition, several Uyghur regions published government work plans for 2023 indicating intensified employment efforts targeting Uyghur surplus laborers. For example, Hotan County’s 2023 work plan specified the construction of additional industrial parks, including parks jointly established with the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC), relying on industrial development to “provide more jobs for the masses.”²⁰ Research has shown that industrial parks are premier destinations for the most coercive forms of labor transfers and the forced work placements of re-education detainees. The 2023 work plan for Karakax (Moyu) County outlines a continued acceleration of industrial park expansion together with the promotion of “labor-intensive industrial clusters,” including the “vigorous development” of “labor-intensive enterprises focusing on socks, hair product processing, shoe leather manufacturing, textile and clothing, electronic product assembly, and light industrial

“person-times” amounts to roughly 10-11 percent, meaning that the number of distinct transferred individuals represents 89-90 percent of the stated “person-times” figure). See Zenz, A. (2023). The Conceptual Evolution of Poverty Alleviation Through Labour Transfer in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. *Central Asian Survey*, 42(4), 649-673. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2023.2227225>

¹⁶ NDRC (National Development and Reform Commission). (2016, May). 新疆维吾尔自治区国民经济和社会发展第十三个五年规划纲要. <http://web.archive.org/web/20200417144706/https://www.ndrc.gov.cn/fggz/fzzlgh/dfzgh/201606/P020191104643495152190.pdf>

¹⁷ Wang, X. (2022, January 11). 新疆动态监测“一户一策”防返贫. China Daily. <https://web.archive.org/web/20220112021101/https://cn.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202201/11/WS61dcd2d4a3107be497a01931.html>

¹⁸ XUAR Government. (2021, December 14). 关于印发新疆维吾尔自治区“十四五”就业促进规划的通知 <https://archive.is/PFzsb>.

¹⁹ XUAR Government. (2021, February 5). 新疆维吾尔自治区国民经济和社会发展第十四个五年规划和2035年远景目标纲要. <http://web.archive.org/web/20210823135410/https://www.ndrc.gov.cn/fggz/fzzlgh/dfzgh/202106/P020210611552789219052.doc>

²⁰ Hotan County Government. (2023, October 1). 和田县人民政府2023年政府工作报告(节选) <https://web.archive.org/web/20240122212609/http://www.htx.gov.cn/htx/c114304/202310/f44ac40812424a1c9bcb113ab2b88936.shtml>

manufacturing” - all industries at the highest risk of forced labor.²¹ The 2023 work plan for Yutian County outlined a labor transfer quota of 82,000 person-times, an increase of 1,000 over the 2022 quota, and planned a skills training “action plan.”²²

On April 13, 2023, the Uyghur heartland’s Kashgar Prefecture published its assessment for work performed in 2022 and plans for 2023, noting that rural modernization and employment needed to be intensified.²³ The report lamented that too many rural Uyghurs were being placed into local (nearby) employment, and that not enough were subjected to “organized transfer employment,” indicating a preference for and planned intensification of state-directed work assignments that transfer Uyghurs outside of their immediate home regions. In line with that statement, the XUAR government stated in June 2023 that for 2023, the region was planning to increase the proportion of workers transferred to other provinces to over 3.5 percent.²⁴

In January 2024, Xinjiang’s state media published an article announcing intensified efforts for economic and employment growth for 2024.²⁵ It noted that that year marks the 75th anniversary of the PRC and represents a “critical” year for the achievement of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021 to 2025). The article called on the Uyghur heartland region of Kashgar to “work hard to drive employment.”

XUAR Employment Policies and Practices since April 1, 2023

By the third quarter of 2023, the XUAR had already exceeded its entire 2022 labor transfer volume of 3.03 million person-times, announcing the transfer of 3.05 million person-times rural surplus laborers between January and September, and surpassing the state-mandated quota by 10.9 percent.²⁶ This indicates a continuation of the region’s intensified employment and labor requirements, following the mandates for the 2021 to 2025 period stated in the region’s economic and employment-related Five-Year Plans.

The continued achievement of the XUAR’s intensified employment requirements is reflected in recent local work reports. A January 2024 article issued by the XUAR government to local media outlets notes that due to employment efforts throughout 2023, an ethnic village in Artush City successfully subjected all 1,606 villagers who met

²¹ Karakax County Government. (2023, January 5). 墨玉县人民政府工作报告.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20240122212558/https://www.myx.gov.cn/detail.html?did=2855>

²² Yutian County Government. (2023, September 27). 【政府工作报告】于田县人民政府2023年政府工作报告.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20240122212543/https://www.xjyt.gov.cn/zfxxqk/fdqk/2023-09-27/4798.html>

²³ Kashgar Government. (2023, April 13). 新疆维吾尔自治区喀什地区“十四五”巩固拓展脱贫攻坚成果同乡村振兴有效衔接规划. DRCNET.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20240122213348/https://h5.drcnet.com.cn/docview.aspx?version=edu&docid=6738059&leafid=26667&chnid=6675>

²⁴ XUAR Department of Ecology and Environment. (2023, June 22). 巩固拓展脱贫攻坚成果 全面推进乡村振兴. Alashankou City Government.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20240119181432/https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:bDGkvjS6nqoJ:www.alsk.gov.cn/info/1182/59815.htm&hl=en&gl=us>

²⁵ Xinjiang Daily. (2024, January 8). 干字当头 推动2024年经济工作迈上新台阶. *Xinjiang Legal News*.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20240122214049/https://www.xjzb.com/contents/219/226572.html>

²⁶ Xinhua Net. (2023, October, 27). 前三季度新疆经济呈现四大亮点. National Investment Project Online Approval and Supervision Platform.

https://web.archive.org/web/20240122213731/https://new.txm.gov.cn/xwzx_9109/xwdt/202310/t20231030_1361660.shtml

the state’s “employment conditions” to state-assigned work.²⁷ Of these, 157 were employed in other XUAR prefectures or other Chinese provinces such as Jiangsu and Shandong. This outcome was achieved through the deployment of “village-based work teams,” which have played a crucial role in the coercive mobilization of targeted ethnic populations. The “village-based work teams” go door-to-door to enforce state policy, monitor compliance, identify deviant citizens for re-education internment, and subject ethnic household members to skills training and work assignments.²⁸ Another January 2024 report published by the Yining County government states how in November 2023, such work teams “devoted all their efforts” to promote the “transfer of the surplus workforce,” successfully “stimulating the inner motivation of [ethnic] villagers.”²⁹ In short, coercive labor mobilization continues unabated.

In 2023, the XUAR also continued its coercive transfer of agricultural land from predominantly ethnic smallholder farmers to large state-run or state-supervised cooperatives.³⁰ Land transfers are a primary method for coercing Uyghurs and other ethnic group members into livelihood changes through labor transfers: after surrendering their land usage rights, surplus laborers are then “liberated” to enter labor transfers into secondary or tertiary work, nearly always in locations outside their original organic communities. According to a November 2023 report published in China’s Legal Daily media outlet, in 2023 in the Uzunbulak Township, Zhaosu County, usage rights for 90 percent of agricultural land had been transferred.³¹ In one of the township’s villages alone, over 500 rural surplus laborers were subjected to labor transfers after usage rights to thousands of acres of their land were shifted. The township party committee secretary emphasized that “the township actively guides farmers to voluntarily transfer land use rights to large-scale [agricultural] planters.”

Coercive labor transfers of targeted ethnic populations to other provinces in China have continued in 2023. During his visit to Xinjiang in August 2023, PRC General Secretary Xi Jinping argued that the Pairing Assistance program that links eastern Chinese provinces with ethnic regions in Xinjiang for cross-provincial labor transfers needed to be strengthened.³² Xi exhorted the XUAR authorities to “guide people from Xinjiang to find jobs in the mainland.” A September 17, 2023, report by China’s national state media People’s Daily reported that Hubei province accepted 4,100 workers, while Anhui province, which is paired with the Uyghur majority population county of Pishan (Hotan

²⁷ Jing, W. (2024, January, 15). 【乡村振兴】激活全面推进乡村振兴新动能！一起来看看这个村. *Artush City Media Center*. https://web.archive.org/web/20240119163708/https://www.sohu.com/a/751950683_121333036

²⁸ Zenz, A. (2023). The Conceptual Evolution of Poverty Alleviation Through Labour Transfer in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. *Central Asian Survey*, 42(4), 649-673. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2023.2227225>.

²⁹ Xinjiang Yining County Government (2024, January 17). 驻村动态 | 目标在肩 愿景可期. <https://web.archive.org/web/20240119153324/https://www.xjyn.gov.cn/xjyn/c113635/202401/b8238dc3257747cea5e9a974c9c7663e.shtml>

³⁰ For a discussion of this phenomenon, see Zenz, A. (2023). Coercive Labor in the Cotton Harvest in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and Uzbekistan: A Comparative Analysis of State-Sponsored Forced Labor. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 56(2), 1–32. <https://doi.org/10.1525/cpcs.2023.1822939> (alternative free download at https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4439694).

³¹ Shang, J., Zhao, M., & Wang, Y. (2023, November 7). 新疆昭苏县：村集体收入倍增的产业“密码”. *Legal Daily*. https://web.archive.org/web/20240118142711/http://www.legaldaily.com.cn/Village_ruled_by_law/content/2023-11/07/content_8924298.html.

³² People’s Daily. (2023, August 27). 牢牢把握新疆在国家全局中的战略定位在中国式现代化进程中更好建设美丽新疆. *CPC News*. <https://web.archive.org/web/20240118103410/http://cpc.people.com.cn/n1/2023/0827/c64094-40064572.html>.

Prefecture), received a transfer of over 5,000 workers.³³ Among these, 295 Uyghurs are reported to have “settled down” in Anhui, indicating a more permanent labor transfer arrangement.³⁴ This is a significant and concerning development, given that labor transfers are part of state efforts to “optimize” (i.e. reduce) the Uyghur population ratio in southern Xinjiang, in order to “end the dominance of the Uyghur ethnic group” in their own homeland.³⁵

State media reports from January 2024 document the continued use of rural surplus labor by specific companies. For example, the Yili Haosheng Muye Biotechnology Co. Ltd., established in the context of Xinjiang’s Pairing Assistance program, announced plans to build a third production line in 2024 to “solve the employment problem of more local surplus laborers.”³⁶

The XUAR has also continued and intensified the deployment of its “Unemployment Monitoring and Early Warning System.” A September 2023 XUAR government report described the use of such monitoring to continually increase targeted households’ “transfer income” (remittances of surplus laborers derived from non-agricultural work).³⁷ Monitoring efforts were to be intensified. An August 2023 notice from the XUAR Work Conference on Consolidating and Expanding the Fruits of Poverty Alleviation stated that officials must improve their “political stance” in grasping the importance of poverty alleviation work, to “resolutely consolidate and expand the results of poverty alleviation,” an effort that was to involve “strengthened tracking and monitoring” of the income and work situation of lower-income rural populations.³⁸

Seasonal Labor Transfers

Xinjiang’s 14th Five-Year Social and Economic Development Plan (2021 to 2025) has mandated closer cooperation between XPCC and other regions for an “enlarged” promotion of seasonal (harvest-related) agricultural labor transfers.³⁹ An April 2022 article on Xinjiang’s employment programs and labor transfers in Tianshan, a prominent media outlet co-sponsored by the XUAR propaganda department, had confirmed that

³³ Yang, M., Jiang Y., & Li, C. (2023, September 17). 就业援疆结硕果. People’s Daily.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20240118162902/https://wap.peopleapp.com/article/7203943/7047614>.

³⁴ The Chinese term 落户安家 indicates a formal relocation of transferred workers’ household registration.

³⁵ Zenz, A. (2021). ‘End the Dominance of the Uyghur Ethnic Group’: An Analysis of Beijing’s Population Optimization Strategy in Southern Xinjiang. *Central Asian Survey*, 40(3), 291-312. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2021.1946483> (alternative free download at https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3862512).

³⁶ Gan, X. (2024, January 1). 巩固: 开足马力赶制新年“第一单”. Tianshan.

https://web.archive.org/web/20240122215843/https://www.ts.cn/xwzx/jjxw/202401/t20240101_18299852.shtml.

³⁷ The National Rural Revitalization Administration. (2023, September 12). 新疆促进脱贫人口和监测对象稳定增收 现场推进会在和田县召开.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20230912172938/https://nrra.gov.cn/2023/09/12/ARTISXzH2PiwztUrsZ3w2KHa230912.shtml>.

³⁸ The National Rural Revitalization Administration. (2023, August 2). 自治区巩固拓展脱贫攻坚成果同乡村振兴有效衔接工作会议召开 坚决巩固拓展好脱贫攻坚成果.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20230925152529/https://nrra.gov.cn/2023/08/02/ARTlwUlaSF1MzMqaQi5y5ANF230802.shtml>.

³⁹ Zenz, A. (2023). Coercive Labor in the Cotton Harvest in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and Uzbekistan: A Comparative Analysis of State-Sponsored Forced Labor. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 56(2), 1–32.

<https://doi.org/10.1525/cpcs.2023.1822939> (alternative free download at https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4439694).

the “vast scale” of cotton, tomato, and other plantations in southern Xinjiang was continuing to “provide an abundance of short-term employment avenues.”⁴⁰

Since April 1, 2023, seasonal labor transfers of predominantly ethnic rural surplus laborers for seasonal agricultural work have continued. An April 20, 2023 report on China News stated that in Luntai County on that date, a predominantly ethnic region, tomato-processing companies received 150 workers for seasonal labor.⁴¹ Similar arrangements were reported for another township in Luntai, involving 245 rural laborers. Similarly, on April 21, 2023, a township in Kashgar Prefecture, a Uyghur heartland region, received a batch of transferred rural surplus laborers to cultivate (plant, tend, harvest) peppers. The report noted that the region needed “large numbers of workers”, and that the state was engaging in “vigorously organizing villagers” for such work.⁴² Another report from April 19, 2023, noted similar arrangements for Wensu County, stating that local governments were “conducting a thorough survey of the rural surplus labor force in the entire township and actively guiding the farmers” in order to address the “problem of labor shortage during the busy farming season.”⁴³ The concurrent publication of numerous similar articles on the subject indicates the presence of a XUAR-wide seasonal labor campaign to meet staffing needs for labor-intensive agricultural work. Such campaigns develop significant coercive pressures, heightening forced labor risks.⁴⁴

Vocational Skills Training Quotas

As part of the 14th Five-Year Plan, the XUAR government is aiming to significantly expand its vocational training efforts, increasing average annual training volumes from 1.2 million to 1.5 million person-sessions.⁴⁵ Vocational skills training in the context of poverty alleviation and labor transfer policies is part of a process that creates high coercive labor risks for targeted ethnic groups.

A XUAR state report from January 2024 confirms that throughout 2023, the government “intensified vocational skills training” and had directed regional authorities to “vigorously carry out order-oriented” work placements for targeted groups, including “focus groups such as those who are difficult to employ.”⁴⁶ Instead of implementing a training volume of 1.5 million person-times, as indicated in higher-level planning documents, in 2023 the XUAR conducted a record-setting 2.5 million person-times of vocational skills training

⁴⁰ Tianshan. (2022, April 7). 是“扶贫创举”还是“强迫劳动”? ——基于调查数据的南疆维吾尔族农户就业扶贫机制与成效分析. https://web.archive.org/web/20220409180753/https://www.ts.cn/xwzx/szxw/202204/t20220407_6339712.shtml.

⁴¹ China News. (2023, April 20). 轮台县塔尔拉克乡: 党建引领促就业 稳岗拓岗保民生. <https://web.archive.org/web/20230717145056/http://www.xj.chinanews.com.cn/dizhou/2023-04-20/detail-ihcnrtzv5402810.shtml>.

⁴² Kashgar Media Center. (2023, April 21). 喀什市阿克喀什乡: 3000亩辣椒苗陆续开始移栽. *The Paper*. https://web.archive.org/web/20240118211409/https://m.thepaper.cn/baijiahao_22804619.

⁴³ Guo, H. & Qian, Y. (2023, April 19). 色素辣椒移栽忙致富又添新出路. *China News*. <https://archive.md/CGZm8>.

⁴⁴ Zenz, A. (2022). Unemployment Monitoring and Early Warning: New Trends in Xinjiang’s Coercive Labor Placement Systems. *China Brief*, 22(11). <https://jamestown.org/program/unemployment-monitoring-and-early-warning-new-trends-in-xinjiangs-coercive-labor-placement-systems/>.

⁴⁵ Ibid; XUAR Government. (2021, December 14). 关于印发新疆维吾尔自治区“十四五”就业促进规划的通知. <https://archive.is/PFzsb>.

⁴⁶ Zhao, C. (2024, January 19). 新疆2023年开展各类职业技能培训近250万人次. *Xinjiang Daily*. <https://web.archive.org/web/20240119143729/http://xj.people.com.cn/n2/2024/0119/c186332-40719270.html>.

sessions, exceeding its specific goal for that year by 66.6 percent. These figures indicate that Xinjiang’s high-pressure campaign to meet and exceed training and transfer targets for lower-income rural populations (predominantly Uyghurs) is being implemented with greater intensity than expected.

Local examples of this skills training drive, likewise published in January 2024, show how the expansion of these training efforts means that the state is increasingly targeting populations that have traditionally not sought to engage in vocational skills training or labor transfers: women in traditional homemaker and caretaker roles.⁴⁷ These groups are at highest risk of coercion. For example, a village in Gongliu County (Yili Prefecture) has been “vigorously” implementing the directive to have ethnic women “leave [their] land but not [their] township,” transferring them from traditional agricultural livelihoods to local factory work.⁴⁸ In this case, 50 ethnic women were subjected to training in sewing skills, a sector that is strongly implicated in forced labor.

Conclusions

Evidence from higher-level policy and state planning documents indicates that coercive employment and poverty alleviation policies targeting Uyghurs and other predominantly Turkic ethnic groups are to continue at least through 2025. Evidence from policy documents and regional and local implementation reports shows that policy implementation has continued in regard to both seasonal and non-seasonal labor transfers. Policy implementation has taken place in the context of greatly intensified vocational skills training efforts, which come with significant coercive risks.

The intensification of labor transfers in the context of the XUAR’s recent Unemployment Monitoring and Early Warning campaign has significantly increased forced labor risks, given that these efforts target groups that have traditionally not chosen to pursue secondary or tertiary sector employment that requires them to abandon farming and/or to surrender their long-standing land usage rights.

Submission Related to the People’s Republic of China (PRC)’s Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR)⁴⁹

Background and New Contextual Evidence⁵⁰

Despite significant contextual differences, the ongoing deployment and expansion of coercive labor transfers in the XUAR and TAR are quite similar in terms of policy framing and the general policy implementation approach. Both focus on targeted recruitment of rural ethnic groups through village-based work teams, coerced labor

⁴⁷ See related discussion in Zenz, A. (2023). The Conceptual Evolution of Poverty Alleviation Through Labour Transfer in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. *Central Asian Survey*, 42(4), 649-673. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2023.2227225>.

⁴⁸ Mulati & Chenm H. (2024, January 16). 巩留: 加强技能培训 助力高质量就业增收. Gongliu County Media Center. <https://archive.ph/jo3VVV>.

⁴⁹ Coercive labor transfers in the TAR were first documented in: Zenz, A. (2020). Xinjiang’s System of Militarized Vocational Training Comes to Tibet. *China Brief*, 20(17). <https://jamestown.org/program/jamestown-early-warning-brief-xinjiangs-system-of-militarized-vocational-training-comes-to-tibet/>.

⁵⁰ For the conceptual nature and measurement of non-internment state-imposed forced labor mobilization, see the ‘Background’ section for the XUAR.

training involving military drills and political indoctrination, state-arranged work placements and transfers to workplaces, and from 2021, an increased focus on retention through Unemployment Monitoring and Early Warning mechanisms.

From 2012, the TAR's Chamdo region initiated a military-style training for the surplus workforce transfer of pastoral and agricultural regions. Chamdo's scheme was formally established in the region's 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20). In March 2019, the TAR issued the 2019-2020 Farmer and Pastoralist Training and Labor Transfer Action Plan, which mandates "vigorous promotion of military-style ... training," applying Chamdo's highly coercive model to the entire region.⁵¹

Overcoming Tibetans' resistance to labor transfer is an integral part of the entire mechanism. TAR-related documents state that the "strict military-style management" of the vocational training process causes the "masses to comply with discipline," "continuously strengthens their patriotic awareness," and reforms their "backward thinking."⁵²

In April 2023, a group of six United Nations Special Rapporteurs on contemporary slavery, trafficking in persons, racism and racial discrimination, cultural rights, minority issues, and right to development issued a joint statement, expressing concerns that labor transfer and vocational training programs in the TAR are used to "undermine Tibetan religious, linguistic and cultural identity, to monitor and politically indoctrinate Tibetans," that these programs employ political indoctrination in a militarized environment, and that they "could lead to situations of forced labour."⁵³ The experts noted that "Tibetans are being drawn away from sustainable livelihoods in which they have traditionally had a comparative advantage, such as wool and dairy production, and into low-paid, low-skilled work in manufacturing and construction." Similar forced labor concerns were raised in the May 2023 report of the United Nations' Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).⁵⁴

Current TAR Policies and Work Plans Impacting the Period April 2023 to April 2024

In early 2021, the TAR reported that it had established 652 rural labor transfer "bases" and developed over 7,000 labor export entities.⁵⁵ That year, the region had published a policy plan to strengthen the intensity of organized labor transfer and training of rural

⁵¹ TAR Government. (2019) 西藏自治区人民政府公报.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200828164034/http://bianba.chhttps://archive.is/wip/y4Bwnangdu.gov.cn/bbxrmzf/c105723/202005/721b7732060f46d086689f445bbf1f1a/files/d211713c75324a7f918714407398cd6a.pdf>

⁵² Autonomous Region Poverty Alleviation Office. (2016, November 17). 提升技能增本领拓宽渠道促就业昌都市扎实推进就业扶贫. TAR Government. <https://archive.is/wip/fN9hz>; TAR Government. (2020, June 10). 齐扎拉主持召开自治区产业建设领导小组会议 要求坚持人民至上 全力推动农牧民转移就业 努力实现“量”的增长“质”的提高. <https://archive.is/NYMwi>.

⁵³ UN. (2023, April 27). *China: "Vocational training" programmes threaten Tibetan identity, carry risk of forced labour, say UN experts.* <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/04/china-vocational-training-programmes-threaten-tibetan-identity-carry-risk>.

⁵⁴ UN. (2023, May 31). *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.* (p. 12). <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N23/153/23/PDF/N2315323.pdf?OpenElement>.

⁵⁵ TAR Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security. (2022, April 12). 关于印发《西藏自治区“十四五”就业促进规划》的通知. https://web.archive.org/web/20220602180058/http://hrss.xizang.gov.cn/xwzx/tzqg/202204/t20220412_293188.html

populations.⁵⁶ In 2022, the TAR government announced that its employment creation programs, including the annual transfer of over 600,000 rural surplus laborers, had achieved “full coverage.”⁵⁷ Its 2022 transfer figure stood at 631,000.⁵⁸

For the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25), the TAR envisioned an expansion of labor transfer channels and “vigorous” promotion of labor transfers targeting rural populations, including through “vigorous” development of rural industry, continued construction of labor transfer bases, accelerated urbanization, and intensified Pairing Assistance with eastern Chinese regions.⁵⁹ (Pairing Assistance has also played a significant role in promoting labor transfers in Xinjiang).

TAR Employment Policies and Practices since April 1, 2023

Efforts to compel Tibetans into labor transfers have continued in 2023. In 2023, the TAR transferred a record number of 647,000 persons, an increase of 16,000 compared to 2022 and 47,000 over the stated target.⁶⁰ Its labor transfer target for 2024 has now been increased to 630,000, and the degree to which these transfers are directly “organized” by the state was raised.⁶¹ Labor transfers were to be accelerated in their “order-based” form whereby companies can put in “orders” for workers, which the state then takes, trains, and delivers to them.⁶² Order-based labor transfers were to meet the growing “employment needs” of enterprises in the TAR. The TAR’s January 2024 government budget report similarly speaks of “...increased skills training for nomads and farmers, promoting labor transfers...”⁶³

The TAR continues to emphasize that to “increase the inner development motivation” of persons along sensitive PRC national border regions is a matter of national security.⁶⁴ “High-quality” development is viewed as central to border defense efforts, and this is secured through coercive poverty alleviation efforts that overcome people’s internal resistance.

⁵⁶ County Poverty Alleviation Office. (2021, September 6). 南木林县关于健全防止返贫致贫动态监测和 帮扶机制的贯彻落实方案. Nanmulin County People’s Government. <https://web.archive.org/web/20220527142814/http://www.nmlx.gov.cn/news-detail.shtml?cid=157894>

⁵⁷ He J. (2022, March 21). 【人社厅】西藏创业就业扶持实现全覆盖. Economy Daily.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20220531170013/http://xz.people.com.cn/n2/2022/0321/c138901-35183994.html>

⁵⁸ TAR Development and Reform Committee. (2023, January 13). 西藏自治区2022年国民经济和社会发展计划执行情况与2023年国民经济和社会发展计划草案报告. China Tibet News.

https://web.archive.org/web/20230610115216/http://epaper.chinatibetnews.com/xzrb/202301/23/content_180505.html

⁵⁹ TAR Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security. (2022, April 12). 关于印发《西藏自治区“十四五”就业促进规划》的通知. https://web.archive.org/web/20220602180058/http://hrss.xizang.gov.cn/xwzx/tzqg/202204/t20220412_293188.html

⁶⁰ Tibet Daily. (2024, January 8). 政府工作报告(摘登). TAR Government.

https://web.archive.org/web/20240123153919/https://www.xizang.gov.cn/xwzx_406/ztzl_416/cxzt/2024nxzzzqlh/tt/202401/t20240108_397369.html

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² TAR Government. (2024, April 10). 西藏自治区人民政府办公厅关于印发西藏自治区2023年优化营商环境工作要点和行动方案的通知. Maizhokunggar County Government. <https://archive.ph/D2LY9>

⁶³ Tibet Daily. (2024, January 22). 关于西藏自治区2023年预算执行情况和2024年预算草案的报告. TAR Government.

https://web.archive.org/web/20240123160459/http://www.xizang.gov.cn/xwzx_406/ztzl_416/cxzt/2024nxzzzqlh/tt/202401/t20240122_399776.html

⁶⁴ Tibet Daily. (2024, January 8). 扎根祖国边陲守护神圣国土——西藏扎实推进国家固边兴边富民行动示范区创建. The United Front Work Department of CPC Central Committee.

https://web.archive.org/web/20240123154359/https://www.zyztb.gov.cn/zyztb/2024-01/08/article_2024010809112014520.shtml

A September 2023 report states that TAR regions were broadening employment channels and carrying out “ideological improvement projects” designed to improve the “ideological and cultural concepts of the masses and enhance the inner motivation of farmers and herdsmen.”⁶⁵ Through a range of activities and trainings, rural Tibetans were being led to “increase their inner motivation” to earn money through labor transfers, overcoming their “conservative employment aspirations.” These are direct indicators of coercion.

Conclusions

Coercive labor transfer, poverty alleviation and employment measures have continued in the TAR, as labor transfer measures have intensified, mandated transfer quotas are continually increased, and efforts to “stimulate” Tibetans’ “inner motivation” and overcome their reluctance to abandon traditional lifestyles in organic communities continue. Coercive poverty alleviation and employment efforts are reinforced through intensified dynamic monitoring (surveillance) and assistance mandates. These measures are creating pervasive and continually intensifying risks of forced labor throughout the TAR.

Assessment of the PRC Governments’ Efforts to meet the TVPA’s Minimum Standards for the Elimination of Human Trafficking in the XUAR and TAR

When assessing the PRC’s efforts to eliminate human trafficking in the XUAR and TAR in accordance with Sec. 108 of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, as amended (22 U.S.C. 7106)), the following observations can be made.

The PRC not only encourages but mandates and enforces non-internment state-imposed forced labor mobilization in the context of de-extremification and poverty alleviation policies. These efforts have not abated but intensified. In short, the PRC continues to accelerate the commissioning of acts that constitute human trafficking for forced labor.⁶⁶ Rather than punishing these acts, the state penalizes officials and other involved entities that fail to enforce related state policies and fall short of state-mandated labor transfer quotas.

There is no legal recourse for the victims. In addition, new witness and documentary evidence published in November 2023 conclusively demonstrates that ethnic group members in Xinjiang who refused state-arranged work placements were subjected to re-education internment.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Mo, R. (2023, November 2). 曲水县: 全力做好“五篇文章” 共治共建和美乡村. Lhasa Government. <https://web.archive.org/web/20240123154647/https://www.lasa.gov.cn/lasa/lsw/202311/9e76fed6d19400687e7f818a31be240.shtml>.

⁶⁶ See especially Zenz, A. (2023). Measuring Non-Internment State-Imposed Forced Labor in Xinjiang and Central Asia: An Assessment of ILO Measurement Guidelines. *Journal of Human Trafficking*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2023.2270366>.

⁶⁷ Zenz, A. (2023). The Conceptual Evolution of Poverty Alleviation Through Labour Transfer in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. *Central Asian Survey*, 42(4), 649-673. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2023.2227225>.

Submission Related to Forced Labor in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, Linked to State-Imposed Agricultural Production Mandates

State-mandated agricultural production constitutes a form of state-imposed forced labor. Mandatory agricultural production quotas are enforced through: (a) state ownership of agricultural land, (b) state-assigned agricultural production mandates, and (c) enforcement of such mandates through the threat of expropriating and redistributing land to more compliant farmers.⁶⁸

The table below demonstrates that state-imposed agricultural production and sale mandates constitute ILO-defined forced labor. This work is often involuntary because of its low profitability, resulting from sale requirements at fixed prices below market rates and the higher profitability of alternative cash crops. Farmers who resist compliance are liable to lose land use rights, and states deliberately exploiting their vulnerable position arising from a lack of viable alternative income opportunities.

Table: Applying the ILO’s 2012 Survey Guidelines⁶⁹ to coercive agricultural production in Central Asian regions. Source in footnote.⁷⁰

Phase / Dimension	Involuntariness	Menace of penalty
1. Unfree recruitment	Adjusted indicator “low profitability in relation to effort” (instead of deception about impending work conditions): Farmers do not want to produce cotton, silk, etc. because their profits in relation to effort are much lower compared to cash crops. Debt bondage (Tajikistan): elite monopsony over the financing of farm inputs forces farmers to produce crops mandated by elites.	Denunciation to (retribution from) authorities, exclusion from future employment (through permanent loss of land use rights), added indicator of abuse of vulnerability: farmers are liable to lose land use rights for not meeting state-mandated production quotas.
2. Work and life under duress	Degrading living conditions, potentially forced overtime (generally exploitative work conditions): Farmers are faced with hard work for low pay to meet state-imposed production quotas. Multiple dependencies: Farmers are often dependent on various state or state-linked entities for	Denunciation to (retribution from) authorities, dismissal, and exclusion from future employment (through permanent loss of land use rights), potential loss of rights or benefits, added indicator of abuse of vulnerability: farmers are liable to lose land use rights for not meeting state-mandated production quotas. Surveillance: Fields can be subject to inspection by

⁶⁸ This argument is developed in detail in: Zenz, A. (2023). Measuring Non-Internment State-Imposed Forced Labor in Xinjiang and Central Asia: An Assessment of ILO Measurement Guidelines. *Journal of Human Trafficking*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2023.2270366>.

⁶⁹ ILO (International Labour Office). (2012a). Hard to See, Harder to Count - Survey guidelines to estimate forced labour of adults and children. https://ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_182096.pdf.

⁷⁰ Zenz (2023). Measuring Non-Internment State-Imposed Forced Labor in Xinjiang and Central Asia.

	essential agricultural inputs, social benefits, pensions, permits, etc.	authorities, who may destroy crops other than those mandated by the state.
3. Impossibility of leaving	Debt bondage (potential indebtedness linked to production): Farmers may incur debts for agricultural inputs and may be unable to repay authorities or the supplying entities if they do not produce and sell state-mandated crops.	Denunciation to (retribution from) authorities, dismissal, and exclusion from future employment (through permanent loss of land use rights), potential loss of rights or benefits, added indicator of abuse of vulnerability: farmers are liable to lose land use rights for not meeting state-mandated production quotas. Surveillance: Fields can be subject to inspection by authorities.

Several Central Asian regions are affected by this form of state-imposed forced labor. Under socialism, all land was owned by the state, and agricultural production targets were determined by the authorities. To date, all these regions leverage ongoing state land ownership to coerce a subset of farmers into meeting agricultural production quotas.

Despite decollectivization, Uzbekistan maintained state ownership over land, privatizing only non-agricultural land in 2021 (Veldwisch & Bock, 2011; Kinstellar, 2022; Melnikovová & Havrland, 2016; Trevisani, 2010). After independence, about 5-10 percent of rural households became large landholders (*farmers*) who continued producing state-mandated crops such as cotton and wheat, as in Soviet times (Veldwisch & Bock, 2011; Trevisani, 2010). They must meet state-assigned production quotas or risk losing their time-limited land use rights (Veldwisch & Bock, 2011; Melnikovová & Havrland, 2016; Tapiola, 2022). An ILO report notes that they are caught in the “same straitjacket” as those forced by the state to harvest in their fields (Tapiola, 2022, p. 11). Conversely, most of the rural population became smallholders (*dekhangs*) growing mostly food crops of their choice (Veldwisch & Bock, 2011).

Despite the end of systematic state-imposed forced labor for cotton-picking, the Uzbek Ministry of Agriculture continues to mandate agricultural production for *farmers*. Local authorities (*hokimiyats*) enforce cotton and wheat production quotas, often involving police officers and prosecutors (UFHR, 2021). *Farmers* must hand over all cotton at predetermined low prices (Melnikovová & Havrland, 2016; UFHR, 2021). From the late 2010s, cotton production along the value chain was increasingly privatized, creating vertically-integrated “cotton-textile clusters” (Tapiola, 2022, p. 48-49). However, this did not significantly improve farmers’ rights or incomes, as it did not create a free market for state-controlled crops such as cotton (Tapiola, 2022; UFHR, 2021). Like state-run entities, clusters constitute local monopolies with the power to impose contractual production quotas on farmers and purchase agricultural outputs at agreed prices, in line with quotas determined by the authorities, who often force *farmers* to work with clusters (UFHR, 2021; Synovitz & Bobojon, 2021).

In Turkmenistan, state-owned agricultural land is leased to (mostly smallholder tenant) farmers through state-run peasant associations (*daikhan berleshik*), the successors of Soviet collective farms. State-determined produce, especially cotton, must be sold to the state at fixed prices, leaving farmers with very little profit (Lerman & Stanchin, 2004; O’Hara, 1997; Stronski, 2017). Since tenant farming is one of few ways to earn an income in rural regions, and with national unemployment rates of up to 50 percent,

farmers are forced to abide by state-imposed lease conditions or lose land use rights (Cotton Campaign, 2022; Stronski, 2017). Farmers often try to grow cash crops on the side (tomatoes or melons), but these risk being destroyed by inspecting officials: local mayors (*kyakims*) with police and state prosecutors (Cotton Campaign, 2022).

In Tajikistan post-decollectivization, cotton production is dominated by a kleptocratic elite, which leverages its monopsony over the financing of farm inputs to coerce cotton-producing farm associations through debt bondage into involuntary production mandates and predetermined cotton prices below international market rates (Hofman, 2018; Synovitz & Ashur, 2019). Despite donor-induced reform attempts and related privatization in the 2000s, the central government continues to use the Ministry of Agriculture to issue mandatory production quotas to local authorities, who must enforce them or risk dismissal (Hofman, 2023; Van Atta, 2009). In both Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, privatization of cotton procurement has not improved farmers' economic situation or reduced exploitation. In Tajikistan, the central government hands down cotton production quotas (planted areas and expected yields) in what Hofman describes as a "disguised" continuation of the socialist command economy, although local enforcement varies (Hofman, 2018, p. 1369-1370; Hofman, 2021, p. 505; Lerman & Sedik, 2008). Farmers can lose land use rights if the authorities deem their use practices "irrational," confining them to abject poverty (Hofman, 2021, p. 506; compare Nekbakhtshoev, 2021, p. 317). Farmers who fail to follow state orders risk harassment by the authorities, an extreme risk in a context where legal rights effectively only exist on paper, officials have ample means to render livelihoods untenable, and loyalty to the state is considered essential (Hofman, 2023). While farmers have some incentives to grow cotton — including the use of cotton stalks for fuel and rural infrastructure mostly being geared towards this crop — many would grow more cash crops such as melons if given free choice (Hofman, 2023).

Practices that effectively constitute state-imposed forced labor are prevalent in silk production throughout Central Asia. In a continuation of Soviet practice, Tajikistan imposes state quotas for silk cocoon production on farmers owning mulberry trees that are passed down for enforcement from central to local state levels (Hofman, 2021; Hofman, 2022). Depending on their sociopolitical capital, farmers "cannot easily refuse," but are almost universally unwilling to produce cocoons, which is very hard work for meager pay (Hofman, 2022). The state sets cocoon prices at exploitatively-low levels, and cocoons must be handed over to district-level authorities. Structurally, very similar forms of state-imposed forced silk cocoon production are prevalent in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan (U.S. Department of State, 2022a). In Uzbekistan, farmers risk losing their land tenure for refusing to "voluntarily" meet state-imposed quotas for silk cocoon production (UFHR, 2023; UGF, 2015; U.S. Department of State, 2022b).

Expert interviews conducted by Dr. Adrian Zenz with members of the Cotton Campaign and academic Dr. Irna Hofman (University of Oxford) in the summer of 2023 confirm that these conditions are ongoing.⁷¹

⁷¹ See: Zenz, A. (2023). Measuring Non-Internment State-Imposed Forced Labor in Xinjiang and Central Asia: An Assessment of ILO Measurement Guidelines. *Journal of Human Trafficking*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2023.2270366>.

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Errors and Inaccuracies in the 2022 and 2023 TIP Reports and Related Suggestions

The 2022 and 2023 TIP reports contain several inaccuracies.⁷²

The reports state that there are two “surplus labor” and “labor transfer” initiatives. However, the “labor transfer of surplus laborers” (Chinese: 富余劳动力转移就业) is only one, not two policies. Since 2017, this policy has also been referred to as Poverty Alleviation through Labor Transfer, and is cited as such in the report of the U.N. Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery.⁷³

The reports state that “2.6 million members of minority communities” are affected by the coercive labor transfer policy. This statement is factually incorrect. The claim that 2.6 million ethnic persons in Xinjiang are subjected to labor transfers is based on the English version of Xinjiang’s 2020 white paper on Employment Rights. This statistic refers only to the first half of 2020, whereas the full-year figure was 3.15 million person-times.⁷⁴ Moreover, the English translation incorrectly states “persons” instead of “person-times” (人次), meaning fewer persons were transferred as laborers can be transferred multiple times per year (in 2019, the difference between “person-times” and “persons” amounted to 283,000 or 11 percent of the total). Also, transfer figures include significant numbers of Han. In 2019 Xinjiang reported surplus labor transfer figures by person (not person-times) at 2.59 million, of which only 1.65 million were from the four southern Uyghur-majority prefectures of Aqsu, Kashgar, Khotan, Kizilsu.⁷⁵

In addition, while forced labor linked to the re-education camps appears to be no longer an active policy, several hundred thousand former detainees can be estimated to continue being subjected to forms of forced labor through this system.⁷⁶

Given that the only apparently active forced labor policy in Xinjiang is Poverty Alleviation Through Labor Transfer, and that this policy has been significantly expanded since 2020, it is advisable that the TIP report highlights this policy, including its propensity to transfer Uyghurs and Tibetans to other provinces, in its opening section on the PRC. In addition, the first long paragraph of the report section on PREVENTION should be

⁷² The errors are located at: U.S. Department of State. (2022, July). *Trafficking in Persons Report July 2022*. <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/20221020-2022-TIP-Report.pdf> (p.175); U.S. Department of State. (2022) *2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: China*. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/china/>; U.S. Department of State. (2023). *2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: China*. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/china/>. They are also discussed in: Zenz, A. (2023). The Conceptual Evolution of Poverty Alleviation Through Labour Transfer in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. *Central Asian Survey*, 42(4), 649-673. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2023.2227225>.

⁷³ Obokata, T. (2022). *Contemporary forms of slavery affecting persons belonging to ethnic, religious and linguistic minority communities*. United Nations General Assembly Human Rights Council. <https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FHRC%2F5>.

⁷⁴ Lawinfochina. (2020, September 1). *Employment and labor rights in Xinjiang*. <https://archive.is/ua3MW>; NEAC (National Ethnic Affairs Commission). (2021, August 13). 新疆维吾尔自治区2020年国民经济和社会发展统计公报. <http://web.archive.org/web/20220812152601/https://www.neac.gov.cn/seac/xxgk/202108/1150387.shtml>.

⁷⁵ Zenz, A. (2023). The Conceptual Evolution of Poverty Alleviation Through Labour Transfer in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. *Central Asian Survey*, 42(4), 649-674. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2023.2227225>.

⁷⁶ Zenz, A. (2023). Innovating penal labor: Reeducation, forced labor, and coercive social integration in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. *The China Journal*, 90. <https://doi.org/10.1086/725494>.

reframed to reflect the presence of two major systems of forced labor, of which the Poverty Alleviation through Labor Transfer system is the larger and more important one.

On page 173 in the section on PREVENTION, the 2022 TIP report states that the PRC “government continued to transfer some members of non-interned minority communities designated arbitrarily as ‘rural surplus labor’ to other areas within Xinjiang ...” (see also the 2023 TIP report page on the PRC⁷⁷). The claim that surplus labor designations are “arbitrary” is incorrect. The PRC defines surplus laborers in accordance with common practice in other countries. In the classic dual-sector or Lewis-Ranis-Fei model of economic development, surplus labor is defined as “labor [that] can be transferred out of the traditional [agricultural] sector without reducing the volume of farm output.”⁷⁸ Abundant labor in the agricultural sector is characterized by low marginal productivity (the marginal product of labor is the change in output resulting from employing one additional unit of labor). China is widely recognized as having abundant rural surplus labor. Labor transfers move workers from primary to secondary and tertiary sectors, which may or may not involve geographical relocation. In Xinjiang and Tibet, the problem is therefore not the way in which workers are designated as surplus laborers, but the coercive means by which the state enforces their transfer.

In addition, this section should specify that surplus laborers are coercively transferred to other regions within Xinjiang and to other Chinese provinces. The section could also specify that new evidence from internal state documents contained in the Xinjiang Police Files shows that those refusing such transfers were liable to be detained for re-education, a fact that has also been corroborated by a new witness account.⁷⁹

On page 175 of the 2022 TIP report and in the 2023 TIP report page on China, both reports suggest that the state “has transported at least 80,000 of these individuals to other provinces for forced labor under the guise of poverty alleviation and industrial aid programs.” The term “these individuals” refers back to individuals subjected to re-education detention. However, Xinjiang’s labor transfer programs, including transfers to other provinces, pertain almost entirely to non-detained rural surplus laborers. An internal academic report, the so-called “Nankai Report,” states that detained persons are liable to be excluded from such transfers because they are not considered to be politically reliable.⁸⁰ Consequently, these transfers need to be accurately described as being part of the Poverty Alleviation through Labor Transfer policy, not linked to the detention system. Also, these transfers are best characterized as transferring an estimated 20,000 individuals per year, rather than stating a cumulative figure (the 80,000 refers to an extrapolated estimate for the years 2017 to 2019 combined, although a more accurate figure for these three years is 76,000⁸¹). Finally, the term

⁷⁷ U.S. Department of State. (2023). *2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: China*. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/china/>.

⁷⁸ Here and below, see Zenz, A. (2023). The Conceptual Evolution of Poverty Alleviation Through Labour Transfer in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. *Central Asian Survey*, 42(4), 649-674. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2023.2227225>.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Zenz, A. (2021). *Coercive Labor and Forced Displacement in Xinjiang’s Cross-Regional Labor Transfer Program*. The Jamestown Foundation. <https://jamestown.org/product/coercive-labor-and-forced-displacement-in-xinjiangs-cross-regional-labor-transfer-program/>

⁸¹ Ibid, p.33 and footnote 51.

“industrial aid” would ideally be replaced by the formal name of this Chinese policy as also employed in academic research, namely “Pairing Assistance.”