Want to talk about what's happening to the Uyghurs with Chinese friends and family, but don't know where to start?
WHY WE HAVE TO TALK ABOUT XINJIANG
Hear Uyghurs speak in their own words

"中文世界的朋友们：去海外留学本应是一件正常的事，但因为有过在美留学的经验，我弟弟在回到新疆后被抓进了集中营。自从2016年后，我与被囚禁的弟弟失去联络，从此杳无音信。我请求关心人权的你一同要求中国政府停止对我弟弟和其他维吾尔人的迫害。" — Rayhan E. Asat, sister of detained Uyghur businessman and philanthropist Ekpar Asat

"我深爱含辛茹苦抚养我的母亲，深爱我依然贫穷困苦的民族，深爱养育我的这片国土；我深切希望我的故乡能像内地一样富裕发达，我担心我的故乡、我的国家陷入动乱和分离；我希望多灾多难的国家是一个多民族和谐共处、能创造灿烂辉煌文明的伟大国家。我将致力于研究新疆社会、经济和文化的发展，致力于民族间的交流和沟通，致力于探索现代转型社会中，民族和谐相处之道，作为我的理想和人生奋斗目标 [...]虽然今天不断有人把我描述或希望我成为一个政治人物，但我始终坚持，我只是一个学者，无意于也不希望被政治化。在学者之外，我惟一愿的称号，是成为一个促进民交流与沟通的使者和桥梁。" — Ilham Tohti, renowned Uyghur intellectual, given a life sentence in 2014 (full text: Chinese, English)

"昨晚又是在梦里才和母亲短暂的见了一面。梦里的她，蜷缩在墙角幽幽的看着我。睡梦中的我，怕自己会醒来。因为梦境是我这三年来，唯一以和母亲相见的地方。梦里，我想对母亲说：妈妈，你一定要坚持下去，千万不要放弃，我一定会将你救出去的，可是我还没来得及说出口，就哭醒了。" — Akida Pulat, daughter of detained Uyghur anthropologist Rahile Dawut
Here are some tips and resources for having a productive conversation.

**1. Not sure how to bring it up?**

Try sliding into the topic by talking about somewhat comparable situations elsewhere (ex. detention camps on the US' southern border; genocide of Native Americans). Or move up to talking about the macro situation by starting with the micro, i.e. bringing up a testimony by a Uyghur person.

**2. Try to talk in a safe & private environment**

Chinese people, even overseas, have good reasons to feel afraid about telling their opinions on this issue (especially in front of other Chinese).

**3. Have credible Chinese-language evidence to support your points**

Many Chinese people may consume different news sources and information from you, and will approach the topic having been exposed to a different version of events. Having evidence-based, rigorously-researched reports on the Uyghur crisis will help you get your point across, even if your conversation partner(s) don't believe you off the bat.

**4. Don't feel defeated & give up if they doubt your sources or argue back**

It's not easy to change someone's mind! Be patient, emphasise a facts-based approach, and remember that your conversation partner may have no knowledge of the issue at all, or has been exposed to a very different information environment. It's very easy to give up on the conversation, to write it off as a lost cause.

Yet when the issue is so urgent, we don't have the luxury of giving up. It can't be left to the victimised group to have these conversations — it's our responsibility to keep listening and talking, to have patience, to keep trying to change hearts and minds.
While "human rights" can sound a bit abstract, you can try using “己所不欲，勿施于人” (from Confucian analects, meaning: What you don't want done to you, don't do to others) as a form of common ground. Try to keep emphasising: “What if they did this to you?” Or your parents? Or your children? Or your friend?

BE SENSITIVE TO OTHERS' SITUATIONS AS FOREIGNERS OR RACIAL MINORITIES

This is especially true if you are not Chinese, an immigrant, or a minority yourself. With the rise in anti-China rhetoric in Western and particularly American contexts, it is crucial not to treat all Chinese people as brainwashed and anti-freedom, or to put Chinese people into the "enlightened/brainwashed Chinese" dichotomy. Migrants’ experience of becoming the racialized "other" after arriving in the West is something that can go both ways: it can lead to ultra-nationalist sentiments, or it can open the door to greater empathy.

KEEP THE FOUNDATION HUMAN, NOT POLITICAL

Many people don't like talking about politics, and this can be an even bigger issue for Chinese people, used to a system where most political topics are sensitive. Emphasise that Uyghurs have the same hopes and dreams as you, and that they can suffer just as you do. You can even speak to the unique hardships experienced by Chinese who have immigrated overseas: "You've worked hard to get where you are — studied diligently in school, worked long hours. Then the police knock on your door at night to take you to an internment camp. Your crime? Being Uyghur. This is what happened to tens of thousands of Uyghurs, if not more, who speak perfect Chinese, followed the rules, and, despite a difficult environment with a lot of discrimination, ultimately succeeded in their careers. Yet they were still sent to the internment camps. Is that fair?"

Of course, at the same time, you want to avoid the "good victim, bad victim" trope — no one is more or less "deserving" of being detained. You want to undermine the state narrative that detainees did something wrong and are being helped by the camps, not suggest that there is a certain "model Uyghur" (while anyone not fitting this definition should be interned). To avoid this implication, you might conclude that these stories, as heartbreaking as they are, represent only a tiny fraction of affected Uyghurs — those who could get their stories out, who have connections overseas — and that there is a far larger number of people who don’t have similar resources, who are suffering equally, and whose stories we are not able to hear yet.
Let's not repeat the mistakes of Western countries, and let's not repeat the mistakes of Western colonialists (it may be helpful to draw a comparison with the American genocide against Native Americans). What do we care what Western states say? What they do or say has nothing to do with whether this is right or wrong. Let's not allow our conversation to be limited by the actions of Western states.

"THE WEST ALSO TREATS MUSLIMS BADLY, SO WHAT OUR GOVERNMENT IS DOING IS JUSTIFIED."

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"THE GOVERNMENT IS JUST TRYING TO PROTECT XINJIANG PEOPLE FROM TERRORISM. XINJIANG IS MUCH SAFER NOW."

- What is the end game of this security plan? What will the result be for the stability of Xinjiang from putting innocent people in concentration camps for years? Will this policy make anyone less resentful of the state? Putting people in camps is just not a good governance model. For genuine long-term peace, the government needs to listen to their grievances and see what society and government can do to improve their lives.
- In fact, the entire narrative of Uyghur Islamic terrorism breaks down somewhat when you consider that non-Uyghurs are also being interned or imprisoned: other ethnic minorities like Kazakh, Hui, and Kyrgyz citizens — and even Han Chinese.

"ALL THIS REPORTING IS FROM BIASED WESTERN ORGANISATIONS WITH ANTI–CHINA AGENDAS."

- Many Chinese people are quite aware that media in China often covers up sensitive events, like the initial outbreak of COVID-19; many Chinese people are at least a little suspicious of Chinese media in general. Reminding them of this may be a helpful entry point for calling the official state-endorsed narrative into question.
- Point them to the personal testimonies of Uyghurs themselves. It’s harder to insist that everything is normal and moreover justified when face to face with videos recorded by former detainees, or by those with missing/imprisoned relatives.
- Emphasise alternative sources, especially those written in Chinese and published by non-American and/or non-Western news sources.
"THE CAMP SYSTEM IS A NECESSARY VOCATIONAL TRAINING MEASURE TO PROVIDE UNSKILLED UYGHURS WITH JOB TRAINING AND TEACH THEM MANDARIN."

- There is plenty of evidence regarding the detention of highly skilled and influential Uyghurs: writers, pop singers, professors, university presidents, businessmen, and more. Many of the detained were perfectly fluent in Mandarin. Are these low-skilled individuals who need to be forced into job training?
- You can read about the high numbers of detained/disappeared Uyghur intellectuals in this list compiled by the Uyghur Human Rights Project, and in this New York Times article (with Chinese version). This feature by the University of British Columbia’s Xinjiang Documentation Project covers celebrities as well as intellectuals.

"EVEN IF THESE CAMPS ARE WHAT YOU SAY THEY ARE, UYGHURS WHO ARE PUT IN THEM HAVE CLEARLY DONE SOMETHING BAD TO DESERVE IT."

- Is it really possible that 1-3 million Uyghurs have committed some crime so terrible that they deserve to be locked up for months, even years? Why are Uyghurs overseas unable to contact their families in Xinjiang, even those who have been released from camps or have not yet been interned?
- Moreover, if they have committed a crime, why are they not charged, tried, and convicted fairly in the court system instead? Why put them into camps without reason or redress?
- What if this happened to you, or to your children, parents, grandparents, friends? Would you be able to say the same thing comfortably: that they did bad things, and deserve this?

"THIS IS NECESSARY FOR CHINA TO BE STRONG/THIS IS GOOD FOR CHINA."

- Few things in recent history have done as much to damage China’s global reputation as its Xinjiang policy, with unfavourable views of China reaching historic highs.
- This is having concrete and negative repercussions on China’s international relations, ranging from sanctions on government officials to Chinese companies being cut out from other countries’ 5G networks. Besides Western countries, China is also losing favour with a range of Muslim nations, and facing record-low levels of support at multilateral institutions like the U.N. Your conversation partner may not care how China is viewed internationally, so long as the Chinese people approve. Yet you can still argue that if China wants to be a global superpower, equal or superior to the United States, it should seriously reconsider the Xinjiang policy that is doing so much damage to its image as a reliable ally and respectable state.
"THE GOVERNMENT ACTUALLY FAVOURS ETHNIC MINORITIES AT THE EXPENSE OF HAN CHINESE."

- Some Han Chinese may point to state affirmative action policies as evidence that there is no mistreatment of Uyghurs (or other ethnic minorities). Yet when it comes to the most prominent example, the policy of giving ethnic minority students extra points in the gaokao, many provinces have recently abolished that policy. Moreover, many ethnic minorities face widespread discrimination in society: less likely to receive callbacks in job applications, less able to rent property, more likely to be unemployed.
- In any case, even if some Uyghurs do get extra points in the gaokao, does that justify putting millions in concentration camps?

"THE GOVERNMENT RESPECTS CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, AND MUSLIMS, LIKE HUI MUSLIMS, ARE WELL TREATED."

- There are many Hui Muslims from Xinjiang in the camp system.
- Across the country, Hui Muslims have also experienced tightening controls on their religion and traditions, as has the tiny Muslim community of 10,000 Utsuls in Sanya. Chinese Christians, too, are facing increasing scrutiny and repression.
- More importantly, it’s true that Hui Muslims in general are pretty well integrated in China — so there is no reason why Uyghurs cannot become as integrated, as long as the government treats them well. Yes, it’s true that Hui elsewhere are not as severely repressed as Muslims in Xinjiang — that should be the model.
- You might point to evidence of high numbers of mosques being demolished, even those used by Hui Muslims. The government has also destroyed many cultural centers, like the historical architecture of Kashgar. Those who don’t particularly care about civil rights issues might at least care about cultural preservation.
- You may also raise the issue of forcing Chinese-language instruction on schools in Inner Mongolia, and the suppression of Mongolian language and identity, in violation of supposed cultural diversity.

RESOURCES FOR TALKING ABOUT XINJIANG
### The Situation at a Glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>380</td>
<td>Number of internment camps built in Xinjiang (Chinese-language report)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 mil</td>
<td>Number of Uyghurs detained in Xinjiang's re-education camps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>880,500</td>
<td>Number of Uyghur children placed in boarding facilities in Xinjiang, most due to the internment of their parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>8,500</td>
<td>Number of mosques demolished in Xinjiang since 2017, more than 1/3 of mosques in the region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-24%</td>
<td>Change in Xinjiang's birthrate in 2019, compared to -4.2% nationwide</td>
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### Government Documents Show:

- "China Cables Exposes Chilling Details of Mass Detention in Xinjiang": the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (read the Chinese documents here)

### Firsthand Accounts Say:

- "Our souls are dead': how I survived a Chinese 're-education' camp for Uighurs": Gulbahar Haitiwaji's story of her two-year detention
- "Confessions of a Xinjiang Camp Teacher": Qelbinur Sedik describes what happened inside a typical re-education camp, where she taught Mandarin
- "A model's video gives a rare glimpse inside internment": Merdan Ghappar's firsthand account, secretly filmed as a detainee; nothing has been heard from Ghappar since (Chinese)
- "I took a business trip to China. Then I got shackled to a chair": Stories of Uyghurs in exile
- "Weather Report: Voices from Xinjiang": Interviews with former detainees and the families of those imprisoned or disappeared
“这不是我想的中国”：一个维吾尔女子的逃亡。自由亚洲电台。维吾尔女子米娜2015年回国探亲期间被关押，遭受酷刑，右耳失聪；三胞胎婴儿中一个因不明原因夭折，两个被强行手术插管进食。三年间，她在狱中目睹九人离世。侥幸逃出生天，米娜向全世界讲述她的经历。

“再教育营”幸存者：我真希望自己一死了之，自由亚洲电台。几位刚从新疆“再教育营”获释的维吾尔人向自由亚洲电台讲述了他们在高墙下的残酷经历。

新疆维吾尔人：“中国，我的孩子在哪里？”, 英国广播公司 (BBC)。BBC调查发现，中国新疆当地政府有系统地把当地家庭的孩子带到一些官方建造的拘留营，强迫他们与自己的父母分开。超过60名离开逃离中国的父母向BBC诉说他们孩子消失的故事。

新疆“再教育营”幸存者：宁死不愿受此折磨：29岁的维吾尔族女子米娜回忆起自己在“教育转化”营中的经历。

维吾尔人暗语泣诉：新疆政策毁家灭族：过去5年，维族男子马木提抱着一丝期望，盼北京可以释放他被关进“再教育营”的妻子。他也因此不敢对外发声。但一路流亡至澳大利亚的他发现，噤声只换来妻子最后身陷囹圄。这次他决定不再保持沉默。

最爭議的維吾爾作家？新疆詩人帕爾哈提的失蹤鮑歌: 帕爾哈提是著迷於古典文學和西方哲學的詩人，矢志於書寫他所關注的人類的處境，但他仍舊無緣無故地消失了。

五名流亡法國的維族人的受迫害經歷：法國的網絡媒體Slate網站近日報道了五名從新疆屢遭磨難，曾經被逮捕，被關押在再教育營，今天流亡在法國的新疆維族人的親身經歷。

“我的母親熱依拉”：新疆研究有罪？被消失的維吾爾人類學家：任職於新疆大學的維吾爾族裔人類學者——熱依拉·達吾提教授（圖中左二），2017年的12月12日，從烏魯木齊前往北京的旅程中，親友們和她失去聯繫，自此音訊全無。

转帐至海外惹祸 维族女遭控“帮助恐怖活动” : 维吾尔女子玛依拉·亚库甫因2013年协助在海外的家人将存款从新疆转至澳大利亚，于2019年被当地政府以“涉嫌帮助恐怖活动”逮补关押，至今仍无音讯。

联合国过问 中国证实失踪维族男已病逝: 维吾尔诗人法蒂玛·阿卜都加富尔今年9月透过联合国，得知她父亲于2018年11月病逝的消息。在消息传出前，他的家人深信他在2017年被送入再教育营。

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新疆集中营受害者在台湾控诉遭性暴力胁迫认罪：曾被监禁在新疆“集中营”465天，被强制接受再教育的哈萨克籍维吾尔族人古力巴哈女士受邀访问台湾。在24日记者会上，她控诉中国政府在所谓“再教育营”进行的残忍酷刑，不认罪就遭受轮奸的邪恶内幕。
OVERVIEW: IN CHINESE

"RE-EDUCATION" CAMPS

"中国在新疆秘密修建大型关押中心," Buzzfeed News/Open Technology Fund

“「墨玉名單」揭維族人年輕也是罪 60萬人口縣城「集中營」就四個," 自由亚洲电台

"新疆'再教育營': 探寻维吾尔'思想转化营'内的真相," 英国广播公司

"维吾尔吹哨人：中国'没有任何理由就抓人,'" 德国之声

"新疆再教育营：文件披露维吾尔人如何被'洗脑'," 英国广播公司

“中国如何监控和审查新疆被拘禁者及其亲友," 纽约时报中文网

"泄露文件揭示中国如何组织对穆斯林大规模拘禁," 纽约时报中文网

"新疆机密名单外泄 中国再教育营系统'再'现形," 德国之声

"泄密文件显示维吾尔人被送入新疆再教育营的原因," 华尔街日报

BEYOND THE CAMPS: SURVEILLANCE/PRISON SYSTEM

"中国的算法暴政: 对新疆警方大规模监控APP的逆向工程," 人权观察

"'严打'下的新疆：监狱监禁人数激增," 纽约时报中文网

“中国如何利用高科技监控压制新疆少数民族," 纽约时报中文网

"严密监视之下的新疆平常生活," 华尔街日报

“【聚焦】报道称新疆被拘押维吾尔人被大批转移至中国各地监狱," 澳大利亚广播公司

FORCED LABOUR

"190团体吁终结新疆强迫劳动 向服饰品牌施压," 德国之声

"新疆穆斯林拘禁营被指存在强迫劳动," 纽约时报中文网

"新疆'再教育营': 智库指维族人遭强制劳动 涉83家国际公司," 英国广播公司

TESTIMONIES BY UYGHURS OVERSEAS

"维吾尔人的逃亡：离开中国，却无法离开恐惧," 纽约时报中文网

“无处安身：海外维吾尔人控诉中国政府牵头的打压行动," 国际特赦组织

“'我也是维吾尔人': 海外维族人要求公开失踪亲属下落," 纽约时报中文网

“从新疆到澳洲，维吾尔警校生见证近三十年生活变迁," 澳大利亚广播公司
FURTHER RESOURCES

COMPILATIONS & DATABASES

A **1264-page bibliography** of news reports, academic works, and personal testimonies, compiled by Magnus Fiskesjö at Cornell University (includes Chinese sources)

A second **bibliography** of informative material related to the Uyghur crisis

**Xinjiang Documentation Project**, created by the University of British Columbia (**Chinese**)

**Xinjiang Data Project**, created by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (multiple languages available, including Chinese)

**Shahit.biz**, a volunteer-run database of disappeared Uyghur, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Hui individuals (**Chinese**)

PERSONAL STORIES & TESTIMONIES

"The imprisonment of the ‘model villagers’: Two Uyghur sisters on what it means to lose their family and way of life," SupChina


"Heaviness in the stomach': A Uyghur daughter alone in America on her birthday during a pandemic," SupChina

"Humanizing Conflict: Uyghur Reality," video interview with Jewher Ilham, The Person Institute

"The atmosphere has become abnormal’: Han Chinese views from Xinjiang," SupChina

**Uyghur Pulse**, a YouTube channel dedicated to video testimonies for detainees and other disappeared persons in Xinjiang

DOCUMENTARIES

"China’s Vanishing Muslims: Undercover In The Most Dystopian Place In The World," VICE News

"China's secret internment camps," Vox

"China Undercover," PBS Frontline

"Inside China’s ‘thought transformation' camps," BBC News

PODCASTS

**Coverage of the Uyghur crackdown** from The Daily (New York Times)

**Stories from the Uyghur Crisis** from the National Public Radio (NPR)
IN CONCLUSION

People respond differently to different arguments. Some people might be swayed by the emotional appeal of Uyghurs' personal narratives; others by the sheer scale of the crackdown; still others by the argument for cultural preservation, or religious tolerance, or the harm being done to China’s reputation.

There isn't one thing that will work for everybody — these are suggestions, not a foolproof roadmap to winning an argument. At the end of the day, you know the person you're talking to the best. Take a facts-based approach; treat it as a conversation, not a lecture.

You don't have to talk about bigger issues, like the party. Simply focus on the Uyghur situation itself, and how horrible it all is. Is it really necessary to do this? What would you think if they did this to you? If it was your family that went missing?

You probably won't convince everyone you talk to. Maybe you only reach those who were always somewhat persuadable, or it takes weeks for someone close to you to believe a single word you say. Yet we still have to try.

Thoughts? Questions? Comments? Feel free to reach out at talkaboutxinjiang@protonmail.com. We hope this guide is useful; we hope it will spur you to action.

我们来一起谈谈新疆。