Introduction Letter:

Hey Delegates!

My name is Dina and I’m a freshman here at MIT! Just last year, I was where you are now, reading my background guide to prepare for MITMUNC, which is why I know from experience that no one really pays attention to the chair intros, so I’ll keep this short and tell you what you need to know about me:

MITMUNC was my first conference when I started MUN and I was absolutely terrible at public speaking at first, so I totally get it if some of you are still learning or get confused by all the parliamentary procedure stuff; please feel free to stop me and let me know if you need help or if there’s anything I can do to make your time here easier/better.

I’m interested in majoring in computer science, but my course load spans lots of subjects right now, so feel free to ask about CS at MIT or about MIT in general, especially if you’re considering applying here!

In preparation for the conference, each delegate will submit a single page position paper on each topic to mitmunc-hrc@mit.edu.

Looking forward to meeting you all in February!

Sincerely,

Dina

Chair, HRC
The treatment of Muslims in China

Topic Summary:

Over a million Muslims are being detained in the Xinjiang region of China, where they are forced to attend “re-education” camps. After months of denying claims that detainment and re-education camps existed, the Chinese government now admits that the camps exist, but asserts that they are both humane and legal. Contrary to these claims, however, recent evidence and reports suggest that the detainees are being denied many basic human rights. Some of the accusations against China include torture, religious discrimination, and surveillance.

Before We Dive In:

The HRC’s job is to protect the 30 rights outlines in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), so I’d suggest you take a look at that before reading more about the detainment of Uighur
Muslims in China. As you read, keep these rights in mind and identify which ones certain events may or may not break. Here's a resource you can use to read more about the UDHR:


Topic details:

The Uighurs are ethnically Turkic Muslims, and about 11 million of them live in western China, specifically in the Xinjiang region. In this region, there seem to be over 1 million Muslims imprisoned in facilities captured via satellite imaging. These facilities are believed to contain “re-education camps”, where Islam is being treated like a mental illness and Uighurs are being “treated” through lessons in Chinese Nationalism and loyalty. The US Congressional Executive Commission on China called this “the largest mass incarceration of a minority population in the world today.”

Aside from reeducation, former detainees have reported both physical and psychological torture,
and many who’ve escaped now live in fear, unable to show their faces when being interviewed about their struggle for fear of retaliation from the Chinese government.

In addition to detention, some Uighur people have disappeared entirely, with family members reporting that they are nowhere to be found. Others are subject to surveillance and forced to offer DNA samples so that they can be monitored.

Though China has not commented much on any of this, reports suggest that it is doing this out of fear of separatist efforts by the Uighur people, as rumors have been circulating that the Uighur people want to form an independent state, even though so such efforts have officially taken place yet.

**What Is The International Community Doing About this?**

Given that China denied the existence of its detainment camps up until very recently and that China is an extremely powerful contributor to the global economy, the international community has yet to take any decisive action. This story, however, is developing very rapidly and things may change in between now and February, so stay on the lookout for responses from various countries, especially the one you are representing.

**Critical Questions:**

How can the rights of Uighur people be protected while also considering China’s sovereignty and its role in the international community?

What consequences, if any, should China face for the human rights violations it has committed?

What reparations, if any, should be granted to the Uighur people who’ve been victimized by this issue?
If there are separatist plans among the Uighur community or in the Xinjiang region in general, how can they be addressed in a peaceful manner?

Resources:

Uighur is also sometimes spelled Uyghur or Uygur, so try searches with different versions of the spelling in your research.


More on how the situation escalated to where it is now:


More on how Uighur Muslims are being treated:


Remember to look for more recent info on the topic and feel free to use other resources than the ones provided above!!

**On the Deteriorating Women’s Rights in Afghanistan**

Introduction:

The protection of women’s rights in Afghanistan has proven to be a difficult task, especially so due to the recent removal of the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) chapter from the new
This has allowed for the laws protecting women to be on standby, once again causing women to be imprisoned for “Moral Crimes” and undergo inhumane gynecological tests. As a committee, the HRC focuses on protecting the rights of all and therefore must find solutions for the problematic situation of the women in Afghanistan. With such a goal in mind, we suggest that the committee focuses on the negative and/or positive implications of topics including: moral crimes, gynecological examinations (virginity tests), and the provision of shelters.

**Key Terms:**

**EVAW (Elimination of Violence Against Women):**

The EVAW law was adopted in 2009 in Afghanistan to address the issue of women’s suffrage and harassment. The law mainly addressed five different offences: rape, enforced prostitution, publicizing the identity of a victim, burning or using chemical substances and forced self-immolation or suicide. In addition, the law tackled issues including forced/early marriage as well as polygamy.

**Zina:**

Zina is defined as unlawful sexual interactions. Zina can be associated with many different actions. Such actions include adultery, fornication before marriage, rape, and prostitution. Zina is considered to be a legal term and is punishable. Under Afghan law, one performing Zina can serve up to 15 years in prison. In Afghanistan, many women are imprisoned under the charge of “attempted Zina”, which

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is considered to be a moral crime. The Human Rights Watch estimated that in 2013, half of all women in prison and 95 percent of girls in juvenile detention in Afghanistan have been arrested on such “Moral Crime” charges.

Shelters:

Shelters in Afghanistan are places where women and girls who flee violence experienced at home can find help. The main benefit of shelters in Afghanistan is that they protect such women from being arrested as “running away”, although not a crime, can then result in imprisonment under charges including “attempted Zina”. Therefore, shelters are seen as a very suitable method of protecting women suffering from harassment and abuse. Such shelters are not governmentally funded as they are instead funded by international donors. The Afghan government has shown no interest in funding shelters through the government budget and has actually taken actions that are a detriment to these shelters.⁴

Key Issues:

Removal of EVAW:

In 2017, a revised new penal code in Afghanistan was adopted by presidential decree.⁵ This penal code included a chapter incorporating all aspects of the EVAW law. However, many members of the parliament opposed the implementation of this law and therefore causing major controversy. As a result, President Ghani ordered the Ministry of Justice to remove the chapter from the penal code.

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This means that actions such as the imprisonment of women for moral crimes and gynecological examinations continue to take place. It also allowed for immoral actions such as honor killings to persist.

**Moral Crimes:**

“Moral Crimes” refer to actions taken by women to escape unlawful forced marriages or domestic violence. Women are being imprisoned for such actions, even if they are the crime victims. Women and girls imprisoned on “moral crimes” charges who were interviewed by Human Rights Watch described abuses including forced and underage marriage below age 16, beatings, stabbings, burnings, rapes, forced prostitution, kidnapping, and threats of “honor killing”. In addition, none of the cases underwent investigation as the women were directly imprisoned and punished.

A major aspect of this issue is the imprisonment of women for performing Zina. The actions have been expanded beyond fornication before marriage and adultery, as it is now used to imprison victims of rape as well as women who run away from unlawful forced marriages or domestic violence. Even though running away is technically not a crime under Afghan Law, women who run away are charged with attempted Zina. This charge assumes that women outside the supervision of their male relatives must have attempted to have sex, therefore allegedly having performed Zina. Therefore, it is deduced that under current Afghan Law, victims of domestic abuse and suffrage are not helped by the government as they are instead imprisoned and punished.

**Gynecological Examinations (Virginity Tests):**

Under Afghan law, women and girls who are accused of the discussed “moral crimes” have to undergo gynecological examinations that are used in courts to determine virginity and/or whether or not a
woman or girl engaged in recent sexual discourse. There are no intense regulations on such examinations, and therefore they are used excessively. Any police official can order these examinations, allowing some women to undergo more than one virginity test without the consent of the woman. In addition, gynecological exams lack medical accuracy in terms of determining virginity. Therefore, the excessive use of vaginal exams by police officers can be seen as sexual assault since the action is inhumane and cruel, and is also subject to abuse by officials. Furthermore, there is a severe lack of female officers, hence increasing the level of sexual assault by officers through such examinations. Currently, women and girls are forced to take such examinations even if they are not guilty of so called “moral crimes”, and therefore acting as a hindrance to the protection of their rights.

Lack of Family Courts:

Family court is court where women are able to seek divorce and custody of their children. There is a severe lack of family courts across Afghanistan, only existing in Kanbul. There are many implications on women as a result. Women who are subject to domestic abuse and rape at home are not able to escape their marriage and are forced to suffer. This happens frequently in Afghanistan due to the fact that a high percentage of women are in a forced or early marriage. This is a major issue as it places the women in a cycle of violence if they choose to run away.

Major Parties Involved:

Afghanistan:

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The Afghan government is keen on preserving the new penal code that was adopted by presidential decree that lacks the EVAW law. Therefore, conservative members of parliament are strictly against the implementation of such laws. In addition, the Afghan government have not taken actions to protect the rights of women and have actually taken some actions that negatively affect women and girls. For example, the Afghan government have attempted to decrease the number of shelters in Afghanistan that protect women suffering from domestic abuse. The Afghan government however have been accepting of aid that does not alter the nature of the law.

**UNAMA (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan):**

UNAMA’s mission is to support the people and government of Afghanistan in achieving peace and stability, in line with the rights and obligations enshrined in the Afghan constitution. One of UNAMA’s main goals is to strengthen the protection of women who are victims of domestic abuse and injustice. UNAMA has many reports analyzing women’s suffrage in Afghanistan and evaluating possible solutions for their situation.

**Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue:**

**Shelters:**

Shelters aim to protect women who flee from the domestic violence and abuse at home. The number of women’s shelters in Afghanistan increased from 14 in 2011 to 18 in 2013. Although these shelters

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are very helpful, the capacity of the shelters is too limited in comparison the number of women that are in need of protection. In addition, the shelters are not funded by the government as they are funded by international donors. This donor assistance has been decreasing in recent times and therefore less shelters can be made to protect the women. The shelters are also combated by the Afghan government as they are essentially providing women with a method of escaping the law. Some actions that were taken by the Afghan government include their effort to take over the shelters in 2011 as well as accusing the shelters of “moral corruption” in 2012. Such shelters are very useful to issue at hand, however solutions must be found to how they are implemented and funded.

FRUs (Family Response Units):

FRUs were established in order to respond to women’s needs. A Family Response Unit is an office of the Afghan National Police that deals with domestic violence and female victims of abuse. However, these units were mainly established in provincial headquarters and large districts; which meant that they had meager resources and poorly trained policewomen and legal advisers.\(^{10}\) In addition, the FRUs had a preference for mediation and therefore meant that victims were placed in danger and perpetrators were not harshly punished and sometimes served little to no jail time.

Timeline:

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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>April 11, 2012</td>
<td>The Attorney General’s Office issued a directive stating that “running away” is not a crime under Afghan law.¹¹</td>
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<td>Late 2012</td>
<td>The Attorney General’s Office plans to implement EVAW law by establishing specialized units responsible for bringing prosecutions.</td>
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<td>May, 2013</td>
<td>Conservative members of parliament submit proposal to amend the EVAW Law.</td>
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<td>2017</td>
<td>New penal code is adopted by presidential decree. Conservative members of parliament oppose the inclusion of EVAW Chapter in the penal code causing major controversy.</td>
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<td>2018</td>
<td>EVAW chapter is removed from Penal code causing many women to be unprotected under the law.</td>
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Suggested Readings:

UN World Report 2018

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Moral Crimes:

https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/05/21/afghanistan-surge-women-jailed-moral-crimes

Fighting for Women’s Rights in Afghanistan:

https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/fighting-women-s-rights-afghanistan

Works Cited:


