

## INTRODUCTION

The Uyghur people are indigenous to East Turkestan<sup>1</sup> [also known as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in northwest China].<sup>2</sup> For many years, the Chinese government has waged an intense and often brutal campaign to repress all forms of Uyghur dissent, crack down on Uyghurs' peaceful religious activities and independent expressions of ethnicity, dilute Uyghurs' culture and identity as a distinct people, and threaten the survival of the Uyghur language.<sup>3</sup> The authorities have routinely equated Uyghurs' peaceful political, religious, and cultural activities with the "three evils" – terrorism, separatism and religious extremism – and have couched their persecution of the Uyghurs as efforts to quash these "three evils."<sup>4</sup> The authorities have also economically marginalized the Uyghurs in East Turkestan through intense and blatant racial discrimination in employment.<sup>5</sup>

On July 5, 2009, Chinese security forces brutally suppressed a peaceful protest by Uyghurs in Urumchi, the regional capital of East Turkestan, and killed many protesters according to eyewitnesses. Ethnic unrest and violence followed, as well as one of the Chinese government's fiercest and most repressive crackdowns on Uyghurs in history.

The Chinese Communist Party has sought to undermine the continuity of Uyghur culture and society by directing specific forms of repression and oppression against Uyghur women, the child-bearers and child-rearers, and compromising their important role in Uyghur society. The government has subjected Uyghur women to double discrimination – on the basis of their Uyghur ethnicity and the basis of their sex. These forms of repression, oppression, and

discrimination have included: the forcible transfer of Uyghur women and girls to eastern China; the perpetration of forms of religious and cultural repression that are targeted to Uyghur women and girls; the subjection of Uyghur women to forced abortions and sterilizations; and the subjection of Uyghur women to employment discrimination on the basis of their sex and ethnicity. This report seeks to highlight these violations.

In addition, while many international media outlets and human rights organizations have focused on the male Uyghur victims of the July 2009 incidents and the aftermath, this report seeks to highlight the active participation of Uyghur women in the July 2009 protests, which in turn is connected to the Uyghur tradition of women participating in political life, and to highlight the fact that Uyghur women were subjected to arbitrary arrests, torture, enforced disappearances, and arbitrary prosecutions along with their male counterparts in connection with the protests.