

GOVERNMENT

China issues white paper claiming Uyghur protection

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China has released a report detailing its protection of ethnic minorities in Xinjiang. But will this convince brands to resume sourcing cotton from the region? Image credit: Shutterstock

By [Jing Daily](#)

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Nothing to see here, folks.

According to a [white paper](#) released by China's State Council Information Office on July 14, the country has made steady progress in protecting the rights of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang.

Over the last 60-plus years, the government has not only lifted more than [2.7 million rural people](#) in the province out of poverty, but also improved the average life expectancy by 30 years, the report states.

In addition, gender equality, reproductive freedom, and the rights to work and education have all been guaranteed.

On religion arguably the heart of contention when it comes to Xinjiang the document repeatedly cites efforts to stamp out extremism, such as establishing vocational education and training centers to "protect basic rights" as well as preventing religious extremists from "abus[ing] the halal concept to interfere with daily routines."

There is even a section dedicated to religious freedom which highlights advancements in renovating religious venues, translating classic texts and training clerics.

The report ends by confirming China's fulfillment of its human rights obligations and lambasting foreign media for suggesting otherwise.

The Jing Take: No doubt, this white paper comes as a response to the ongoing headlines of Uyghur forced labor.

Last year, The Australian Strategic Policy Institute issued a [groundbreaking report](#) that identified 27 factories in China using the predominately Muslim ethnic minority group under coerced conditions and named more than 80 global brands tied to them.

With increased attention on supply chains, the US Customs and Border Protection agency subsequently [banned all products](#) coming from Xinjiang in January 2021.

This culminated in a PR crisis in March, which saw fashion names such as Nike, adidas, **Burberry** and **H&M** in the firing line for their stances against Xinjiang cotton.

Despite this fallout, it is unlikely the white paper alone will sway the industry to resume sourcing cotton from China's northwest. For one, it is somewhat out of their hands. The issue has now escalated beyond fashion houses, as governments have gotten involved in demanding greater supply chain transparency.

Just this month, the United Kingdom **issued the report** titled, "Never Again: The U.K.'s Responsibility to Act on Atrocities in Xinjiang and Beyond," while the U.S. Department of State warned that businesses connected to Xinjiang "could run a high risk of **violating U.S. law**," underscoring the political pressures at play.

As such, brands will need to err on the side of caution.

On the one hand, they cannot afford, literally, to pass up on Chinese consumers, especially as they have been **driving recovery post-pandemic**.

On the other hand, with global consumers pressuring brands to stand up for social justice, staying silent is not a good option either.

So, while China celebrates its Xinjiang wins today, brands may have to think twice about joining the party.

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