

COUNTRIES OF SPECIAL CONCERN

January – July 2020

GENOCIDE WATCH

The Alliance Against Genocide



Countries of Special Concern: January – July 2020

Genocide Watch exists to predict, prevent, stop, and punish genocide and other forms of mass murder. As part of this mandate, Genocide Watch is actively monitoring the progression of genocides and genocidal processes around the world.

The purpose of this Genocide Watch Report on Countries of Special Concern is to monitor developments in countries with ongoing genocides and report on countries at increased risk for genocidal massacres. Based on developments over the past six months, the countries of concern include: Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, China, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, India, Mali, Mozambique, Myanmar, South Sudan, Syria, Venezuela, and Yemen.

China- Stage 8: Persecution, Stage 9: Extermination & Stage 10: Denial

The Chinese government's systematic persecution of the Uyghur ethnic and religious minority in the far-western Xinjiang province has become active genocide. Since 2017, the Chinese government has forced as many as [two million](#) Uyghurs into “reeducation” internment camps. In the camps, they are subjected to Chinese Communist Party indoctrination and “taught” to reject their Uyghur cultural and religious practices. In March, the Associated Press reported that the Chinese government sends Uyghurs who “graduate” from the camps into [forced labor](#), working for major Western companies such as Nike, Patagonia, and Coca-Cola. Outside the camps, the Chinese government has transformed Xinjiang into an Orwellian security state, implementing a highly intrusive [surveillance system](#) that tracks and analyzes the actions of all Uyghur citizens. In June, the Associated Press revealed that the genocidal plan for the Uyghurs has become more centralized. Leaked Chinese Communist Party documents illustrate that Beijing is orchestrating a campaign of [mass sterilization](#) of Uyghur women of childbearing age, a crime which the 1948 Convention on Genocide, to which China is a signatory, unequivocally includes as an act of genocide. Evidence of Beijing's genocidal policy includes documentation that [more than 80%](#) of all newly placed Intra-Uterine Devices (IUDs) in China were placed in the Uyghur-dominated Xinjiang province. Forced displacement and sterilization campaigns created an alarming [84% reduction](#) in Uyghur population growth between 2015 and 2018. While China's status as a global economic, diplomatic, and military power has long shielded it from open criticism, the unveiling of these new details of an ongoing genocide in China serves as a challenge for international law and its ability to bring justice to the Uyghur population.

Myanmar- Stage 8: Persecution, Stage 9: Extermination & Stage 10: Denial

The Myanmar military, the Tatmadaw, committed massive genocide against the Rohingya more than three years ago. Recent reports demonstrate that oppression in the Rakhine state now includes both Muslim Rohingya and the Buddhist Rakhine ethnic group. In 2017, the military killed more than ten thousand Rohingya and forced more than 700,000 Rohingya to flee to neighboring Bangladesh or risk deadly sea journeys to reach safety in Malaysia. In January, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) [ordered the government](#) of Myanmar to protect Rohingya against acts of genocide. Despite this ruling, the Tatmadaw has stepped up attacks against the 600,000 remaining Rohingya in Myanmar, as well as against the Rakhine and Chin ethnic

minority groups. Under the veil of counterinsurgency operations, the army has [cut internet](#) to the region and launched daily airstrikes, [displacing thousands](#) of civilians. In the first three months of 2020, the [UN reported](#) 432 incidents of grave violations against Rohingya children, which left 41 dead and another 170 wounded. Continued fighting in April killed another [40 civilians](#). In May, more than [200 buildings](#) were also burned, prompting accusations of [war crimes](#). Despite the Myanmar government's [continued denials](#), the persistence of attacks on Rohingya civilians in Myanmar provides ample evidence that the Tatmadaw's genocidal campaign continues.

Afghanistan- Stage 9: Extermination

In spite of a preliminary [peace agreement](#) between the U.S. and the Afghan Taliban in February, the Taliban have continued their terrorism against the Afghan government and civilians. Almost immediately after signing the agreement, Taliban forces launched [dozens of assaults](#) each day, killing an average of [25 to 40 Afghan security personnel](#). Violence against civilians has not just been collateral damage of the Taliban insurgency, but part of a systematic campaign: in the first six-months of 2020, the Taliban have deliberately killed or injured more than [800 Afghan civilians](#) and killed more than [1,200 civilians](#) in total. Continued assaults by an Islamic State affiliate group, including the heinous slaughter at a Kabul [maternity ward](#) that killed 24 mothers, newborns, and nurses, have crushed any prospects for peace with ISIS. According to many U.S. policy experts, the Taliban's influence in Afghanistan is even stronger today than it was 20 years ago. False optimism about the possibility of peace has now been replaced by well-founded fear of a [Taliban takeover](#) in Afghanistan. While it is still possible for the Taliban and the Afghan government to engage in dialogue, the current Taliban stranglehold on the country makes a Taliban takeover increasingly likely. The prospects for women's rights and the rule of law in Afghanistan are dim.

Burkina Faso- Stage 9: Extermination

Since the 2016 jihadist insurgency, Ansarul Islam, the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM), and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) have continued to wreak havoc on civilians in Burkina Faso. Fighting has killed more than 2,000 people in the last 18 months alone and as a result, Burkina Faso now faces the [world's fastest-growing displacement crisis](#), with more than 850,000 *Burkinabés* forced from their homes to refugee camps in northern Goudoubo. From 2018 to 2019, the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), reported that Burkina Faso had the highest percentage increase in civilian deaths due to conflict in Africa, jumping from 178 deaths to 1,295 killed, a [650% increase](#). In an effort to stop the armed Islamists, state security forces and ethnic vigilante militias have violently targeted Fulani civilians, the ethnic group from which many of the jihadists have recruited. Government forces and allied militias have carried out [extrajudicial killings](#) of hundreds of suspected fundamentalist Muslim Fulani. The result has been a spiraling cycle of ethnic violence.

Democratic Republic of the Congo- Stage 9: Extermination

There has been a serious escalation of violence against civilians in the three northeastern provinces of Ituri, North-Kivu, and South-Kivu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). In Ituri, agriculturalist Lendu militias have systematically attacked Hema pastoralists in what the [UN reported](#) "amount to crimes against humanity and possibly even genocide". Banyamulenge villages have been emptied by attacks from local Mai Mai militias allied with Burundian militias. From January to February 2020, armed Islamist groups operating as the Allied Democratic

Forces (ADF) killed 260 civilians – mostly women and children – across North and South Kivu. For the last year, Kivu has been at the center of the Ebola epidemic and ADF attacks have prevented life-saving health resources from reaching vulnerable communities. Across the three provinces, from November 2019 to June 2020, ethnic militias and state security forces have killed more than [1,300 people](#) and internally displaced more than 1.2 million Congolese.

Mali- Stage 9: Extermination

In 2012 a Touareg insurgency began in northern Mali. Since then Islamists allied with ISIS in West Africa have extended their massacres to central Mali. In the first six months of 2020, the UN reports that massacres killed more than [580 civilians](#) in central Mali, more than all civilians killed during 2019. Jihadist terrorism in Mali is part of the spread of armed Islamist groups across the Sahel, which has seen a rise in lives lost due to [terrorist attacks](#) from 770 in 2016 to more than 4,000 in 2020. Until the Mali government is able to organize effective counterinsurgency measures that include relief to famine affected regions in central Mali, civilians in Mali and in neighboring countries will face the threat of genocidal massacres by armed Islamist groups.

South Sudan- Stage 9: Extermination

In February, the warring ethnic armies in South Sudan took a step toward ending a brutal seven-year civil war that has claimed an estimated 400,000 lives. President Salva Kiir invited rebel-leader-turned-Vice President Riek Machar into his government as part of a long-awaited [peace deal](#). Even if the leaders of both sides say they are committed to peace, they have not yet addressed long-standing communal tensions that have been fueled by years of war. An outbreak of violence in Jonglei state in May, where [intercommunal clashes](#) left more than 300 dead, highlights the [tenuous situation](#) and the difficulties of sustaining peace.

Syria- Stage 9: Extermination

As Syria entered its tenth year of a civil war that has killed more than [400,000 people](#), the Syrian government and its Russian allies intensified their assaults on the last anti-government stronghold, Idlib province. [Daily airstrikes](#) from early December to the end of February, forced more than [950,000 Idlib residents](#) from their homes. Much like previous government-backed sieges in Aleppo and Eastern Ghouta, Assad's regime has indiscriminately bombed civilians and targeted hospitals and other medical facilities in Idlib. Attacks on hospitals and deliberate bombing of first responders, which under international humanitarian law are war crimes, are regular occurrences by the pro-Assad Syrian and Russian air forces. In March, [WHO stated](#) that Syria and its Russian allies have launched more than 500 attacks on medical facilities across the country since 2016.

Yemen- Stage 9: Extermination

Despite many U.N. statements that Yemen is the world's worst humanitarian emergency, Yemen has become a forgotten crisis. Since 2015, the civil war in Yemen has killed more than [100,000 people](#), forcibly displaced 3.6 million Yemenis, and left more than 24 million people out of a population of 28 million in need of humanitarian assistance. In 2020, the Saudi and United Arab Emirate-led coalition continued its aerial bombing campaign against civilians in Houthi controlled areas. The Houthis control Sanaa and are backed by Iran. The Saudi bombing included a February attack that killed [19 children](#). The U.S. and U.K. sold the Saudis their bombers as well as the laser guided bombs made by the Raytheon Corporation that killed thousands of

civilians. The U.S. allowed the sales in spite of embargos imposed by the U.S. Congress and Senate, which were over-ridden by waivers from former Raytheon lobbyists at the highest levels of the Trump administration. War crimes are crimes of universal jurisdiction. The global COVID-19 pandemic and failure to raise even half of the international funding needed to feed Yemen's population has resulted in mass starvation, especially of babies and small children. The world's worst cholera epidemic has also killed thousands of people. Due to siege tactics employed by the Saudi coalition, in June, UNICEF warned that without funding, more than 23,000 children are [at risk of dying](#) of acute malnutrition.

Venezuela- Stage 8: Persecution

The Maduro regime continues to violently persecute political opponents in Venezuela. According to a report from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Venezuelan security forces have killed at least [1,300 people](#) in the first five-months of 2020. The violence in Venezuela is part of Maduro's campaign to stay in power, including grave human rights abuses by police, the army, and paramilitaries, politicide, and crimes against humanity. The destruction of the Venezuelan economy by the Maduro regime, including hyperinflation, has forced more than three million Venezuelans to flee from the country.

India- Stage 7: Preparation

Since the 2014 election of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Hindu nationalist BJP party, Islamophobia has been on the rise. India is home to nearly 200 million Muslims. Although interreligious tensions date back centuries, the Indian government is now introducing laws to codify anti-Muslim persecution, a legal precursor to many past genocides. In December 2019, [India's parliament passed](#) the Citizens Amendment Act (CAA) and proposed a National Registry of Citizens (NRC). These new national policies promote Islamophobia. The National Registry of Citizens provides for the stripping of citizenship from Indians who cannot present documents proving their ancestors' presence in India. The Citizenship Amendment Act excludes Muslim refugees from neighboring countries to receive fast-tracked Indian citizenship. Street demonstrations against these laws and the subsequent government crackdown [killed dozens](#) of mostly Muslim protesters. Protests and riots continued into February, devolving into pogrom style violence that left [50 dead](#) in the worst interreligious incidents between Hindus and Muslims in India in decades. These events are all part of an ongoing BJP campaign of "[systematic scapegoating](#)" and incitement against India's Muslims.

Mozambique- Stage 7: Preparation

In 2020, militants affiliated with the Islamic State have increased attacks in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province. Recent events in northern Mozambique are alarming: [armed clashes](#) in Cabo Delgado province have risen dramatically from only three in the first year of the jihadist insurgency in 2017 to 43 in only the first four months of 2020. Since 2017, Islamist militants have killed more than [700 civilians](#), including an April massacre of [52 villagers](#) in Cabo Delgado. The insurgency in Mozambique is reminiscent of the rise of [Boko Haram](#) in Nigeria.

For more information about countries of special concern, visit the [Genocide Watch website](#) .

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