

# Surveillance and Repression of Muslim Minorities: Xinjiang and Beyond

An International Day Conference  
Saturday, 7 March 2020, 9.15am-5pm  
Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS, University of London

Supported by the SOAS China Institute; Kings College London; London School of Economics; Citizens, Nations and Migration Network (University of Edinburgh); and Queen Mary University of London.

## PROGRAMME

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| 09:15 - 09:30 | Welcome: Tim Pringle (SOAS, University of London)<br>Opening remarks: Aziz Isa Elkun (SOAS, University of London)   |
| 09:30 - 11:00 | Panel 1: Islamophobia and the Global War on Terror<br>Chair: Dibyesh Anand (University of Westminster)<br>Speakers<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rachel Harris (SOAS, University of London)</li><li>• Nitasha Kaul (University of Westminster)</li><li>• Asim Qureshi (CAGE)</li></ul>   |
| 11:00 - 11:30 | Break   |
| 11:30 - 13:00 | Panel 2: Surveillance, Capital and State Power<br>Chair: Tim Pringle (SOAS, University of London)<br>Speakers<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Darren Byler (University of Colorado, Boulder)</li><li>• Rahima Mahmut (World Uyghur Congress, UK)</li><li>• Nisha Kapoor (University of Warwick)</li><li>• Maya Wang (Human Rights Watch)</li></ul> |
| 13:00 - 14:00 | Lunch break   |
| 14:00 - 15:30 | Panel 3: Are we talking about Cultural Genocide?<br>Chair: Eva Pils (Kings College London)<br>Speakers<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Joanne Smith Finley (University of Newcastle)</li><li>• Penny Green (Queen Mary University of London)</li><li>• Ondřej Klimeš (Czech Academy of Sciences)</li></ul>   |
| 15:30 - 16:00 | Break   |
| 16:00 - 17:00 | Looking to the Future: Responses to the Crisis<br>Chair: Rachel Harris<br>Speaker<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Halmurat Harri Uyghur (Uyghuraid)</li></ul><br>OPEN DISCUSSION   |

## Speakers Biographies

**Aziz Isa Elkun** is a poet, writer and researcher. He was born in East Turkistan (Uyghur Autonomous Region, China). He graduated from Xinjiang University majoring in Russian and Chinese languages. He has been living in London since 2001. He has published many poems, stories, and research articles in Uyghur and English. Since September 2017, he has served as Secretary of the International PEN Uyghur Centre ([www.uyghurpen.org](http://www.uyghurpen.org)). He has co-authored English language articles published in Inner Asia and Central Asian Survey. He has worked as Research Assistant on two research projects based in SOAS, University of London: "Sounding Islam in China" and "Uyghur Meshrep in Kazakhstan." [www.azizisa.org/en/biography\\_aziz\\_isa\\_elkun](http://www.azizisa.org/en/biography_aziz_isa_elkun)

**Rachel Harris** is Professor of Ethnomusicology and Director of Research for the School of Arts at SOAS, University of London. Her research focuses on the politics of culture and heritage in China, and the ethnography of religious life among the Uyghurs. She led the Leverhulme Research Project 'Sounding Islam in China' (2014-2017; <http://www.soundislamchina.org/>) and is now working with Turan University in Kazakhstan on a British Academy Sustainable Development Project to revitalise Uyghur language and culture in the diaspora. Her latest monograph, 'Soundscapes of Uyghur Islam,' will be published by Indiana University Press in autumn 2020. <https://www.soas.ac.uk/staff/staff31068.php>

**Nitasha Kaul** is a multidisciplinary academic, novelist, poet, artist, and economist. She has published and spoken on themes relating to identity, democracy, political economy, Hindu nationalism, rise of the global right, feminist and postcolonial critiques, Kashmir, and Bhutan. She holds a joint doctorate in Economics and Philosophy (2003) from the University of Hull, and is the author of the book 'Imagining Economics Otherwise: encounters with identity/difference' (Routledge, 2007), and the novels 'Future Tense' (Harper Collins, 2020) and the Man-Asian shortlisted 'Residue' (Rupa/Rainlight, 2014), the first novel in English by a Kashmiri woman. She co-edited a volume for the Economic & Political Weekly (EPW, December 2018), which brought together Kashmiri women scholars writing on 'Women and Kashmir'. She is currently a Senior Lecturer in Politics and International Relations at the University of Westminster in London. She is on twitter at @NitashaKaul. <http://www.nitashakaul.com/>

**Asim Qureshi** graduated in Law (LLB Hons, LLM) and completed his PhD in International Conflict Analysis from the University of Kent. He is the Research Director at the advocacy group CAGE, and since 2003 has specialised in investigating the impact of counterterrorism practices worldwide. He is the author of 'Rules of the Game: Detention, Deportation, Disappearance' (Hurst, 2009) and 'A Virtue of Disobedience' (Unbound, 2019). Since 2010, he has been advising legal teams involved in providing legal defense in terrorism prosecutions in the US and at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. <https://www.cage.ngo>

**Rahima Mahmut** is a Uyghur singer, human rights activist, and award-winning translator of the poignant prison memoir *The Land Drenched in Tears* by Soyungul Chanisheff. Her latest work includes working as a consultant and translator for the ITV documentary *Undercover: Inside China's Digital Gulag* shown July 2019; and translator for the latest BBC documentary *China: A New World Order*. Currently, she is the UK representative for the World Uyghur Congress.

**Darren Byler** is a post-doctoral fellow at the Center for Asian Studies, University of Colorado, Boulder where he studies the effects of Chinese infrastructure and security technology as part of the China Made Research Initiative. His book project titled *Terror Capitalism: Uyghur Dispossession and Masculine Violence in a Chinese City* focuses on the effects of digital cultural production, surveillance industries and mass internment in the lives of Uyghur and Han male migrants in the city of Ürümqi, the capital of Chinese Central Asia (Xinjiang). He has published research articles in the *Asia-Pacific Journal*, *Contemporary Islam*, *Central Asian Survey*, the *Journal of Chinese Contemporary Art*. In addition he has provided expert testimony on Uyghur human rights issues before the Canadian House of Commons Subcommittee on Human Rights and writes a regular column on Turkic Muslim society and culture for the journal *SupChina*. <https://www.colorado.edu/cas/darren-byler>

**Maya Wang**, a senior China researcher for Human Rights Watch, has written extensively on the use of torture, arbitrary detention, human rights defenders, civil society, and the use of technology in mass surveillance and social control in China. Her latest report, *China's Algorithms of Repression: Reverse Engineering a Xinjiang Police Mass Surveillance App*, and her series of press releases on China's mass biometric collection and artificial intelligence from 2017 has contributed to a wave of international attention on China's mass surveillance practices in Xinjiang, China and globally.

**Penny Green** is Professor of Law and Globalisation and Head of the Law Department at Queen Mary University of London. She studied Psychology, Anthropology and Sociology at the Australian National University and holds a doctorate in Criminology from the University of Cambridge. She has published extensively on state crime theory, state violence, Turkish criminal justice and politics, 'natural' disasters, genocide, mass forced evictions, and resistance to state violence. She is Founder and Director of the [International State Crime Initiative \(ISCI\)](http://www.isci.org.uk). Her most recent projects include a comparative study of civil society resistance to state crime in Turkey, Tunisia, Colombia, Papua New Guinea, Kenya and Myanmar; Myanmar's genocide against its Muslim ethnic [Rohingya](http://www.rohingya.org) population; and forced evictions in Palestine/Israel. Her seminal work, with ISCI colleagues, on the Rohingya genocide (*Countdown to Annihilation: Genocide in Myanmar 2015; Genocide Achieved, Genocide Continues: Myanmar's Annihilation Of The Rohingya 2018*) has drawn widespread global attention.

**Ondřej Klimeš** is a researcher at the Oriental Institute of Czech Academy of Sciences. His expertise is in contemporary Xinjiang and China issues with focus on ethnic policy, ideology, and propaganda. He received his Ph.D. from the Charles University in Prague (2012). He was a visiting scholar at the Center for Chinese Studies in Taipei (2010) and a Fulbright – Masaryk Fellow at the Department of Central Eurasian Studies of the Indiana University in Bloomington (2010–2011). His research languages are Chinese, Uyghur, and Russian. He is the author of *Struggle by the Pen: The Uyghur Discourse of Nation and Nationalism, c. 1900-1949* (Brill, 2015) and of research articles published, e.g., in the *Journal of Chinese Political Science* or *Central Asian Survey*.

**Joanne Smith Finley** is Senior Lecturer in Chinese Studies in the School of Modern Languages, Newcastle University, UK. Her research interests include evolving Uyghur identities in Xinjiang, China; Islam, gender and the state in Xinjiang and the Uyghur diaspora; PRC counter-terrorism as state terror in the era of mass internment; and corrective 're-education' in Xinjiang as cultural genocide. Her monograph *The Art of Symbolic Resistance: Uyghur Identities and Uyghur-Han Relations in Contemporary Xinjiang* (Brill Academic Publishing) was published in 2013. Dr Smith Finley is co-editor of two volumes: *Situating the Uyghurs between China and Central Asia* (Ashgate, 2007) and *Language, Education and Uyghur Identity in Urban Xinjiang* (Routledge, 2015), and Guest Editor of a Special Issue (2019) for *Central Asian Survey*, titled: 'Securitization, Insecurity and Conflict in Contemporary Xinjiang'. <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/sml/staff/profile/jsmithfinley.html#background>

**Halmurat Uyghur** is a Uyghur activist based in Finland. He began to campaign on Uyghur rights issues when his parents were sent to one of the concentration camps in the Uyghur region in 2017. He was among the first to stand up and openly talk about his parents' arbitrary detention. Halmurat has used social media to promote his cause. Since January 2018, he has encouraged people to stand up for their relatives, and has uploaded hundreds of motivating videos for this purpose. Thanks to his video campaigns he has become one of the most popular Uyghur activists on social media, with over 15,000 followers. He has used this to start hashtag campaigns like MeTooUyghur, which has created a platform for Uyghurs to create awareness of their own personal cases. <https://uyghuraid.org/>

**Nisha Kapoor** is Associate Professor in Sociology at the University of Warwick, UK. Her research interests are in critical race and postcolonial theory; race, gender and the War on Terror; and her most recent work centres on border regimes, surveillance and the security state. She is author of *Deport Deprive Extradite: 21st Century State Extremism* (Verso, 2018), which formed part of a larger ESRC funded project exploring counterterrorism, technologies of expulsion and authoritarianisms cultivated through the War on Terror. She has published in multiple academic journals and is co-editor of *The State of Race* (Palgrave, 2013), with Virinder S. Kalra and James Rhodes.