

UYGHUR MUSLIMS

In the GTA

General Info

- Throughout most of history Uyghurs have lived in a contested part of Central Asia now called Xinjiang, China with a rich history filled with beautiful poetry, music, extravagant hospitality and educational achievements.
- The current situation in Xinjiang makes it essentially impossible for Uyghurs to travel abroad (or communicate with those outside of China). As a result, right now any Uyghurs emigrating to the GTA do so from outside of China.
- There are two kinds of Uyghur immigrants in Canada: skilled professionals and refugees. Uyghurs are relative newcomers to Canada, with the first wave of immigrants arriving in the early 2000s. Because of ongoing oppression in the homeland, many Uyghurs desire to take refuge in Canada.
- Uyghurs in China, where the majority of them live, are enduring a genocide, including a systematic effort to eradicate the Uyghur identity: religion, language, culture, history and procreation efforts. It is estimated that right now 1.5 million Uyghurs are in about 380 internment camps across Xinjiang China. This has resulted in heart-breaking family separations, affecting absolutely every Uyghur family in and outside of their homeland. These camps involve forced labour practices, systematic sterilization of Uyghur women, physical abuse, and psychological warfare designed to “break the roots” of Uyghurs, molding them into docile Chinese citizens.
- Uyghurs in the GTA speak Uyghur, Mandarin, and English.

Population: 500 (approx. 2000 Uyghurs live in Canada)
Concentrated in Etobicoke, Mississauga, and Scarborough.

What are their beliefs and lifestyles?

- From animism Uyghur beliefs mingled with Buddhism, Taoism, Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism and Nestorianism. Following the Arab invasion in the 8th century, Sunni Islam increasingly became the dominant Uyghur belief system.
- The rise of communist ideology in China has meant the Uyghur worldview increasingly fuses atheism, folk Islam, and religious practices rooted in inarticulate traditional Central Asian customs and practices.
- The Chinese government’s deliberate, systematic, and ongoing efforts to re-engineer Uyghur identity in China are all part of a campaign to “break the roots” of the Uyghur beliefs and worldview. For example, since 2017 an estimated 8,500 mosque buildings have been destroyed in the Uyghur homeland.
- Some Uyghurs also worship Jesus Christ. While quantitative numbers are difficult to find, anecdotal evidence and reports suggest there are 10,000+ Uyghur believers in China. There are also scattered Uyghur believers throughout the diaspora, including in Canada.
- Uyghurs in the GTA are cognizant of the espionage activities and lurking reach of superpower China. While some of this fear is irrational and rooted in trauma, there is a legitimate aspect to this concern.
- Uyghurs in the GTA struggle to trust others, particularly other Uyghurs

Pray for Uyghur Muslims

- There are few known Uyghur followers of Jesus.
- Pray for an end to the Uyghur genocide in Xinjiang, China.
- Pray for God’s protection, peace and wisdom over the lives of Christians working in the areas of research, policy, and advocacy to end the Uyghur genocide.
- Pray for Chinese believers and churches in the GTA to lay down generational prejudices towards Uyghurs, and reach out with courage, empathy, humility, and practical gospel love.
- Pray for media outreach efforts to Uyghurs.
- Trying to connect with GTA’s Uyghurs is difficult because of their tendency to be cautious due to their history of persecution at the hands of the Chinese government. Pray for our workers as they attempt to connect with GTA Uyghurs.
- Ask God to use believers trained in various tools for outreach to Muslims (e.g., Global Gates Canada’s “Engaging the Nations” booklet, Al Massira and Bridges courses, etc.) to find & befriend GTA Uyghurs & share life & the good news of Jesus.



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