

China's Algorithms of Repression: Reverse Engineering a Xinjiang Police Mass Surveillance App | Human Rights Watch

By Human Rights Watch

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Since late 2016, the Chinese government has subjected the 13 million ethnic Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang to mass arbitrary detention, forced political indoctrination, restrictions on movement, and religious oppression. Credible estimates indicate that under this heightened repression, up to one million people are being held in “political education” camps. The government’s “Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Terrorism” (Strike Hard Campaign, 严打暴恐专项行动) has turned Xinjiang into one of China’s major centers for using innovative technologies for social control.

“Our research shows, for the first time, that Xinjiang police are using illegally gathered information about people’s completely lawful behavior – and using it against them.”

This report provides a detailed description and analysis of a mobile app that police and other officials use to communicate with the Integrated Joint Operations Platform (IJOP, 综合联合行动平台), one of the main systems Chinese authorities use for mass surveillance in Xinjiang. Human Rights Watch first reported on the IJOP in February 2018, noting the policing program aggregates data about people and flags to officials those it deems potentially threatening; some of those targeted are detained and sent to political education camps and other facilities. But by “reverse engineering” this mobile app, we now know specifically the kinds of behaviors and people this mass surveillance system targets.

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