

EXCLUSIVE

Chinese Police Are Demanding Personal Information From Uighurs in France

Officials have threatened to detain relatives of those who don't comply.

BY **BETHANY ALLEN-EBRAHIMIAN** | MARCH 2, 2018, 4:53 PM

Amid a global campaign to monitor and control the Uighur diaspora, Chinese police are demanding that Uighurs living in France hand over personal information, photos, and identity documents — and in some cases, the personal information of their French spouses.

Police officers from local public security bureaus in China have asked French Uighurs to send their home, school, and work addresses, photos, scans of their French or Chinese ID cards, and, in some cases, the ID cards of their spouses and scans of their marriage certificates if they were married in France.

Chinese police have contacted French Uighurs directly via phone or WeChat, a Chinese messaging app, or have paid visits to their family members in China, asking relatives to convey these demands, according to screenshots of WeChat conversations and a phone recording obtained by **Foreign Policy**.

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One Uighur living in Paris who now has French citizenship first refused to comply, then gave in when relatives in China asked the individual to send the information and documents, including home address, school name and address, work name and address, and a scan of the individual's French passport.

"I was very, very angry. I said, 'I am not Chinese, I am French, I have nothing to do with China,'" the Uighur living in Paris told FP, requesting anonymity. "My family said very sadly, 'Yeah, but you are Uighur and we are here.'"

The Chinese Embassy did not respond to a request for comment. The French Embassy also did not respond.

Uighurs are a Turkic-speaking ethnic minority concentrated in China's northwest region of Xinjiang. Hundreds of people have died in recent years amid a low-level insurgency in the region, as some Uighurs have chafed under the Chinese government's increasingly repressive policies. Uighurs armed with knives have committed several terrorist attacks in major Chinese cities.

But in the past year, the Chinese government has greatly intensified its campaign against Uighurs in Xinjiang, **constructing** a high-tech digital surveillance regime. Authorities have lined streets and alleys with cameras equipped with facial recognition software, **created** a DNA database intended to include all residents, labeled each resident as "safe" or "unsafe," and installed ID readers at bus stops, train stations, and shopping malls; those deemed unsafe are not permitted to enter.

Tens or perhaps even **hundreds of thousands** of Uighurs have also been forced into re-education camps without due process, where they have been detained for weeks, months, or indefinitely. Some have **died** in the camps.

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studying or working in the United States, France, Turkey, Australia, Egypt, and elsewhere, **issuing** an order for Uighurs abroad to return home and threatening their families if they do not comply. Some of those who have returned have been arrested, detained, or have simply disappeared. Egyptian police appear to have cooperated with the Chinese demands, detaining and **deporting** Uighur students.

FP has obtained evidence of four instances of Chinese police demanding personal information from French Uighurs, beginning in 2017. The Uighur living in Paris said that there are many more cases, and that most Uighurs there are afraid to speak about what is happening for fear that their families back in China will be sent to re-education camps.

Police officers in contact with French Uighurs have made explicit threats, according to the messages viewed by **FP**.

“Hello, I am a police officer with the [redacted] police station,” begins one such WeChat conversation, viewed by **FP**, in mid-2017. “Let’s have a good talk, otherwise it will be a lot of trouble to have to pay a visit to your father and mother’s house every day.”

The police officer went on to demand that the recipient send contact information, copies of diplomas from French schools, work and home addresses, proof of employment, and a copy of the individual’s passport. The officer also asked the individual to take a photo of themselves standing next to a famous local building, presumably to verify the individual’s location, and to send that, too, along with photos of their workplace and school.

In a recorded phone conversation obtained by **FP**, a Chinese police officer spoke with another Uighur living in France, asking for personal information. The Uighur told the police officer that they had obtained French citizenship,

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In other cases, family members living in Xinjiang have relayed police demands via WeChat to relatives living in France.

“What you should send are the certificate of your nationality, your ID card etc., your work contract where you work, contract of your home where you live, your master’s degree diploma, your Ph.D. diploma and all other related certifications,” one mother told her daughter in a message viewed by [FP](#).

Uighurs living abroad may have once believed that they had escaped Chinese government control when they left China. But in the past year, the repressive policies have followed them. Even those who remain abroad worry that their families will soon disappear, as so many others already have, into Chinese re-education camps.

“Every day I pray early, then I call my mom,” said the Uighur in Paris.

“Everyone here, they pray every day that they can hear the voice of their parents.”

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