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Human Rights Crisis: Mass Internment of Muslim Ethnic Minorities in China

November 3, 2018
by Nicholas Ripley

In August of 2018, a panel of members of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination stated that they had received [credible reports of the extrajudicial mass detentions](#) of around one million ethnic Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and other Muslim ethnic minorities in China. These detentions of Muslim ethnic minorities are [happening in the northwest autonomous region of Xinjiang](#) under Chinese authority and in violation of international human rights law. The detained people are being kept in secret internment camps that have been described as “[no rights zones](#).”

Sources, including activists from the Chinese Human Rights Defenders and escapees, allege that the attempted religious and political “reeducation” practices include nationalist propaganda, [forced feeding of pork and alcohol](#), physical abuse, and even torture. [Uyghur students returning to China from abroad](#) have also been detained, with some reportedly dying in custody. In China, officials are representing Muslim [ethnic minority practices as a mental illness](#) that needs to be cured at all costs. China’s persecution of this minority group, based solely on ethno-religious identity, is part of its “[strike hard](#)” campaign. This campaign was started in response to fears of extremism and terrorism after riots occurred in the region in 2009. [China denies any mistreatment](#) and insists the detention centers are part of a vocational and educational training program.

China has a long history of forcing minority societies under its control to conform to Han Chinese cultural norms. This process of [sinicisation has its roots in Chinese imperialism](#) and has been employed across [Japan, Korea, and Vietnam](#). It includes enforcing a common dress code, religion, culture, political belief, and language across diverse societies in order to [cultivate a sense of national unity](#). Currently, this practice is being bolstered by worldwide fears over so called “Islamic extremism.” While denying reports of abuse, Li Xiaojun, the director for publicity at the Bureau of Human Rights Affairs of the State Council Information Office stated that [this practice may not be ideal but is necessary](#) to deal with religious extremism.

The [right to practice one’s religion](#) without government persecution is one of the fundamental tenants of human rights law, but [China’s constitutional protection of this right is lacking](#). China only protects the right to worship in one of five [officially sanctioned religious](#) organizations. While the religious freedom of some Muslims is ostensibly protected by the Islamic Association of China, Uyghur Muslims are notably absent from this list and have historically [faced harassment and abuse](#) because of their ethno-religious background, but never on this scale. Article 37 of [China’s Constitution](#) states that all arrests must be approved by either the procuratorate, the state prosecution, or the courts. It also outlaws discrimination and oppression based on ethnicity and religion. Both of these protections are being violated.

China's actions present clear violations of basic human rights, [including](#) “protections on freedom of expression, religion, family life, privacy, and to movement as well as from being arbitrarily arrested, detained, and subjected to torture and ill-treatment.” They also violate international protections against racial and ethnic discrimination and the right to an adequate avenue for legal redress. These protections are contained in Article 2 of the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) as well as Article 2 of the [International Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#) —both of which China has ratified. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination requires States to work to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination and to guarantee equality before the law regardless of race, color, or national or ethnic origin. China's actions also violate the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), including Article 2 prohibiting religious and ethnic persecution and Article 5 prohibiting torture. Lastly, China's practice of child separation violates the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), which states that no child should be subjected to “arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home, or correspondence.” The enforcement mechanisms of these instruments have not been triggered and no official reviews have been conducted, but the case should be brought to the UN Human Rights Council, especially at China's Universal Periodic Review.

Collective international action is required to combat China's mass detention and abuse of Muslim ethnic minority citizens. The statements made during the [UN panel discussion serve as an encouraging call to action](#) but an official statement on behalf of the UN is still needed. Due to the secretive nature of the Chinese government in enacting this program, [more fact-finding will likely be necessary](#) before international bodies take decisive action. In the absence of any official fact-finding by international bodies, individual journalists and activists have been racing to collect data online before it can be scrubbed by China's government.

Repressive Surveillance in Xinjiang

November 8, 2018

by Gina Uyghur

The technological dystopia and the death of privacy described in contemporary science fiction is now a tangible reality for the Uyghur minority in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, China. Having witnessed their homeland being turned into a place where virulent hatred is directed against ethnic minorities and propaganda is used to sustain totalitarian rule, Uyghurs have become helpless victims of [omnipresent government surveillance](#) and are now trapped in a vicious cycle of oppression.

Xinjiang is China's largest and most resource-rich province. It is also the motherland of [Uyghurs](#), an indigenous Turkic ethnic group that is racially and linguistically different from China's Han majority. Xinjiang has long been a site of ethnic conflict between Uyghurs and Han Chinese. Shortly after annexing the East Turkestan Republic in 1949, China renamed the area Xinjiang—literally translated as “New Frontier”—Uyghur Autonomous Region in 1955. From then on, any usage of the region's original toponym, “East Turkistan,” or display of its crescent moon flag is perceived by the Chinese state as [separatist agitation](#), punishable by life imprisonment or death.

Pervasive ethnic inequality is another root cause of this divide. While Article 4 of [China's constitution](#) expressly assures that, “[a]ll nationalities in the People's Republic of China are equal” and “have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages and to preserve or reform their own folkways and customs,” Uyghurs are nevertheless deprived of true equality because they are seen as [politically recalcitrant and culturally distinct](#).

Under the ethnocentric ideology of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP,) authorities and educators in Xinjiang promote a Mandarin-centered curriculum instead of Uyghur language, part of what is officially referred to as “[bilingual education](#).” Uyghur children are encouraged to assimilate to Chinese culture by [dressing up like Han Chinese](#), and in predominantly Uyghur cities like Hotan, the use of Uyghur language is [completely banned at all educational levels](#). Han Chinese migrants in Xinjiang are provided with jobs, bank loans, and economic opportunities that are [denied to indigenous Uyghurs](#). As a result, many Uyghurs have grown increasingly intolerant of Chinese hegemony and have started to challenge state-sponsored assimilation through “[everyday resistance](#)” and [mass protests](#).

The existing heavy-handed treatment of Uyghurs was exacerbated by the appointment of [Chen Quanguo](#) as Xinjiang's new Party Secretary in 2016. Chen first gained prominence as the innovator of a sophisticated and repressive network of surveillance while serving as Party Secretary in Tibet. After being transferred to Xinjiang in 2016, [he immediately replicated the same repressive policing strategy](#). He began his “strike hard” campaign by [requiring Uyghur families to host Chinese officials](#) at their homes and provide them with information about their private lives and political views. Authorities have even imposed various restrictions on daily necessities such as [tracking kitchen knives with QR codes](#) and [requiring shops to produce police approval to buy sugar](#).

Chen then implemented a network of checkpoints and “[convenient police stations](#)” where officers check Uyghurs’ cell phones and require them to install a monitoring application. [Facial-recognition cameras](#) were installed in neighborhoods, homes, on roads, and in train stations. Authorities are using “[the Integrated Joint Operations Platform](#)” to manage and analyze data from those cameras, computers, smartphones, license plates, and IDs, as well as any personal records. Uyghurs whose data is deemed unpatriotic are subjected to investigation and detention in “[political re-education camps](#).” According to the Chinese Human Rights Defenders, the [number of criminal arrests in Xinjiang increased by 731 percent from 2016 to 2017](#), coinciding with repressive policies implemented by Chen. Police have also [collected DNA](#) and other biometric information from Uyghurs using a [U.S. company’s DNA-sequencing equipment](#). Meanwhile, surveillance of the Uyghurs now extends beyond China’s borders, as China created a [database of Uyghurs](#) abroad—even if they are citizens of other countries—to curtail their activities and threaten them by [persecuting their family members back in Xinjiang](#).

International human rights law (IHRL) applies to the repressive surveillance situation in Xinjiang through the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (UDHR). As a party to the UDHR, China is obligated to recognize “the inherent dignity” of all human beings, including the Uyghurs, and to secure their fundamental rights to “liberty” and “privacy.” For instance, Article 12 of the UDHR states that “[n]o one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence” and recognizes that “[e]veryone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference.” Relatedly, right to privacy in one’s own home and personal life is central to the “liberty” and human “dignity” protected by Articles 1 and 3 of the UDHR. However, China has its own interpretation of the legal meaning of IHRL norms and has [emphasized that the international law of sovereignty protects it](#) against external interference regarding its actions on its own territory. Moreover, Article 40 of the Chinese constitution justifies the invasion of privacy “[to meet the needs of State security](#).” Hence, without a meaningful international action, China is unlikely to reverse its policies.

Reunification on the Korean Peninsula: Do We Need to Start Preparing for One Korea?

November 12, 2018
by Kate Juon

Since the ceasefire at the end of the Korean War in 1953, North and South Korea have developed in vastly different directions. South Korea has become one of the world's largest economies, while North Korea's totalitarian regime has become one of its most notorious. As if [stuck in a time capsule](#) from the 1950s, North Koreans are culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically distinct from their southern relatives. [Dreams and hopes of reunification remain](#) among older generations like current South Korean president, [Moon Jae-In](#), but the assimilation problems of North Korean refugees illustrate the reality of how difficult reunification can be.

Since the 1990s, the South Korean government has used North Korean refugees in South Korea as a sample group for possible reunification. Under its [Constitution](#), the South Korean government views North Koreans as citizens, defining South Korea's boundaries as the entire Korean Peninsula. With the amendment of the [North Korean Refugees Protection and Settlement Support Act](#) in 1999 (Refugee Support Act), South Korea vowed to provide settlement support, diplomatic protection, and a pathway to establish permanent domicile for North Koreans. With this declaration of a national obligation to North Koreans, South Korea's managing authority, the Ministry of Unification (MOU), believes its assimilation program would show the "[will and capability for unification of Korea](#)."

Yet despite the MOU's position as the agency to plan and develop a reunification process, it continues to struggle with effective policies to help [more than thirty thousand North Korean](#) refugees adapt and integrate into South Korean society. North Koreans face the same issues [many refugees experience after escaping](#) from communist countries into capitalist societies: they are often ignorant of the "[basic skills](#)" of the modern world, such as banking, using a phone, riding public transportation, and even enjoying leisure activities. Additionally, many refugees are dealing with the [traumatic memories](#) of public executions, violent beatings, and the starvation of family members.

In response, the MOU operates a [twelve-week education and assimilation program](#) through its Hanawon Resettlement Center. After administering a crash course on the internet, phones, laws, jobs, schooling, and the general high-tech and fast-paced life of South Korean society, the government gives refugees [an apartment and housing subsidy](#)—as well as some cash—to help get them settled for the first year. Still dealing with physical and mental damage they have experienced, refugees do not have the opportunity to heal from the trauma and are almost always overwhelmed by the feeling of having too much freedom.

Though the Refugee Support Act establishes necessary support and protection measures, the notion that North Koreans must "[strive to lead healthy and cultural lives by adapting themselves](#)" is extremely problematic. North Koreans, riddled with severe mental health

disorders, arrive in a country that has historically ignored [mental health issues](#). With a primary focus on providing money, goods, and education as the basis of support and protection, South Korea continues to disregard the need for North Koreans to cope with the trauma. This disregard for mental health treatment may even be the biggest reason for the struggle to assimilate.

Similarly, the affirmative action program pursuant to [Article 17](#) of the Refugee Support Act ignores the reality of the [highly competitive society](#) North Koreans are expected to join. North Koreans are expected to adjust and compete with their South Korean brethren, all within the two-year employment protection period. Additionally, South Koreans frequently [blame North Koreans](#) for their struggles to assimilate, a standard South Koreans generally do not apply to other foreigners. And as the dissimilarities of South and North Koreans continue to increase, reunification seems less feasible. Even as the government continues to expand settlement support programs, South Korean attitudes towards North Koreans have become more negative.

Though the recent historical meeting between North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un and South Korean President Moon Jae-In on April 27, 2018, to issue the [Panmunjom Declaration for Korean Peninsula Peace, Prosperity, and Unification](#) has provided hope for reunification on the Korean Peninsula, the assimilation experience of North Koreans reveals a challenging future. Along with younger generations of South Koreans becoming [increasingly less interested](#) in reunification, the biggest concern is the estimated [millions or even trillions USD](#) it could cost to implement modern healthcare, infrastructure, and school systems in North Korea. If reunification became a reality, [colossal affirmative action programs](#) would be needed just to allow North Koreans to be professionally competitive with South Koreans. And with only [fifty-seven percent of South Koreans](#) supporting reunification, inconsistencies between policy obligations and community support suggest that reunification may be more of a fantasy than a reality.

Land Reform in Indonesia: What Now?

November 19, 2018

by Kate Morrow

Local customary law theoretically establishes land rights in many parts of Indonesia. However, the central government has historically ignored indigenous ownership and stewardship as it gave away indigenous land to corporations for palm oil and mining operations. Recently, the central government has adopted various [land reform policies](#) that allegedly [expand local communities' power](#) over their land by granting them formal ownership.

Traditionally, indigenous groups have acted as stewards of their ancestral lands without having formal titles to them, which has led to land rights disputes with the government in addition to poverty and inequality. The [International Convention on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights \(ICESCR\)](#) provides guidance in Article 15, which requires states to recognize the right of everyone to participate in cultural life. For many indigenous peoples in Indonesia, this right manifests itself as and depends on the right to use and inhabit their customary lands.

Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara ([AMAN](#)), or the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago, estimates there are [fifty to seventy million](#) indigenous peoples in Indonesia, where the total population is 250 million. AMAN currently represents over seventeen million members from 2,332 indigenous communities. The Indonesian government has only recognized 1,128 of these indigenous groups.

In 2013, the Indonesian Constitutional Court [ruled that indigenous peoples in Indonesia own their customary forests](#), not the state. Despite this decision, the [government continues to support large corporations](#) using the land rather than standing up for indigenous groups' rights. [Customary land](#) is land that is used by indigenous groups, often without any formal ownership or permission other than tradition. Historically, the [government has often exploited this "unowned" land](#) by granting it, without consulting indigenous groups, to foreign corporations in the name of economic development. Indigenous groups have had [no formal control](#) of the cultivation and development of their ancestral land. While Indonesia has [tried to create effective land reform policies since 1960](#), a renewed international focus on deforestation and climate change brought increased attention to Indonesia's policies. President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo has taken steps to provide titles for customary lands and forests to indigenous groups and [pledged to formally register all land](#) in the country by 2025.

The government recently passed [Presidential Regulation 86/2018](#), which instructs the implementation of recent agrarian reform policy. Its stated purpose is to reduce inequalities in land ownership and empower communities through redistribution, ownership, legalization, and control over land. It sets out two paths through which to do this: asset arrangement and access arrangement. Asset arrangement grants ownership and control of land, while access arrangement focuses on community empowerment by providing infrastructure to build skills, increase technology use, and facilitate access to capital and marketing. The regulation [sets up a special](#)

[task force](#) to address issues, delegates funding to national and regional income sources, and requires local city- and province-level task forces to report once every three months.

The land that will be redistributed or legalized [includes expired building rights and cultivation rights titles](#) (titles to use state owned land but not to own it), forest land released from the government's ownership, formerly disputed land, and former mining areas, among others. The government [pledged to distribute titles for 127,000 square kilometers](#) of forest to indigenous groups, and nineteen thousand square kilometers were distributed as of 2017. However, the progress is limited. In Indonesia, indigenous groups (*masyarakat hukum adat*) must be officially recognized by the government in order to qualify as recipients of the land titles, which means a significant portion of customary land owners, primarily in Papua, are excluded from the regulation's benefits.

Despite activism and [UN pressure to pass a bill](#) that would remove the recognition requirement and acknowledge the existence of indigenous populations, the legislature stalled in moving the draft bill to discussion or even a vote. The government continues to insist that the [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) does not apply to Indonesia's *masyarakat hukum adat* communities because it considers all Indonesians to be indigenous and therefore have indigenous rights, with the exception of the ethnic Chinese population. This approach marginalizes certain groups and erases histories of conquest and colonialism amongst the ethnic groups of the archipelago.

Land reform is a crucial step in guaranteeing and protecting indigenous rights, even only as required by the ICESCR. The government must move forward with the indigenous peoples bill to fairly implement the new land reform regulations. While it would be easy to say that the renewed focus on land reform and development, especially from [international actors](#), will push the government towards passing the bill, next year's presidential election is looming. Land rights and human rights [are not a strategic focus](#) of either campaign. Political tensions surrounding religion and the economy will probably remain the focus, resulting in continued inaction on land rights, despite Jokowi's alleged commitment to reform.

People of Faith are in Danger in China

December 5, 2018

by Gina Uyghur

Having survived China's biggest crackdown on religion during the Cultural Revolution, religious groups across China were only left with their battered selves and got used to living under the shadow of repression. Over the past two decades, the U.S. State Department's annual Report on International Religious Freedom has repeatedly [identified China as a country of particular concern](#) because it has "engaged in particularly severe violations of religious freedom." [Open Doors USA's World Watch List](#) has also placed China among the world's [fifty worst persecutors of Christians](#).

China's hostility toward religious groups has only escalated since Xi Jinping became the leader of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 2013, and Xi is now [China's most powerful leader since Mao Zedong](#). Xi views religions of foreign origin, particularly Islam and Christianity, as "[dangerous foreign import](#)," and is concerned that these religions are capable of undermining both communist state authority and [patriotic fervor](#). In April 2016, he gave a speech at the National Religious Work Conference in which he emphasized the need to "[actively guide](#)" and "[sinicize](#)" religions. This was followed by the release of newly revised Regulations on Religious Affairs which proclaimed that religions must "[practice the core socialist values](#)" and drew a close correlation [between religion, religious extremism, terrorist, and separatist activities](#). These regulations put restrictions on religious liberties like religious schooling and freedom to choose places of worship. They also allow the government to monitor online religious discussions and established new penalties for violations of the regulations, coinciding with Xi's aim to [both secularize and subjugate religious belief and activity to the control of the CCP](#).

Throughout 2017 and 2018, Chinese authorities [have torn down hundreds of crosses](#) from churches, [forcefully demolished churches](#), [banned online sales of the Bible](#), [censored and added state propaganda to pastors' sermons](#), [used physical violence against parishioners](#), and [imprisoned countless pastors](#) and [human rights advocates](#). The state continued to pursue its antagonistic strategy toward Tibetan Buddhists and Falun Gong members by [expelling, imprisoning, and torturing](#) monks and nuns who refuse to pledge loyalty to Beijing and prosecuting members of Falun Gong as evil sectarians under [Article 300 of the Chinese Criminal Law](#). Official restrictions on religious freedom of Hui Muslims have also increased, as the authorities launched a "[rectification campaign](#)" that has included the removal of Arabic signs and decor from mosques and other buildings, [prohibitions on calls to prayer, and bans on sale of the Quran](#).

China is also adopting an idiosyncratic approach in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. The government has cited [Islamic extremism](#) as a justification for its [repressive policies in Xinjiang](#). The Chinese government has imprisoned up to one million Uyghurs into [reeducation camps](#), where they are being detained for prolonged periods of time without due process, subjected to torture, and forced to renounce Islam and to respect Xi's political dogma in a [quasi-religious manner](#).

Chinese law ostensibly guarantees religious freedom. Article 36 of the Chinese constitution grants citizens “[freedom of religious belief](#)” and the protection of “[normal religious activities](#).” However, the scope of “normal” religious activities is not specified, thus making it unclear [whether China’s Constitution protects the same range of beliefs that is universally recognized under international law](#) or whether determination of “normal” religious activities should be left to the discretion of Chinese authorities. In addition, [Article 251 of the Chinese Criminal Law](#) penalizes state officials who “illegally deprive citizens’ right to religious beliefs or who encroach on minority nationalities’ customs or habits.” Unfortunately, China’s own law is a paper tiger, broad-gauged but susceptible to political influence, and it is therefore hardly a real judicial constraint.

China’s repression, persecution, and internment of people of faith violates international law codified in the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (UDHR) and the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR). As a signatory of the UDHR, China must recognize freedom of religious belief under [Article 18](#). Moreover, because China signed the ICCPR, [expressed its commitment to advance the rights recognized by the ICCPR](#), and promised to eventually ratify it, China should refrain from intentional acts that counteract the treaty’s object and purpose. In particular, Article 18 of the ICCPR encompasses both the right to form and hold religious beliefs and precludes states from impairing these rights. Furthermore, Article 2 of the [Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#) (CAT), ratified by China in 1988, precludes China from using exceptional circumstances such as a fight against “radical Islamism” as a justification for torture of detainees in Xinjiang.

With its economic power and influence over developing countries, China’s state policies toward religious minority groups are creating a repressive blueprint for other authoritarian regimes looking to quell religious and ethnic tensions. Thus, the persecution of religious minorities in China should trigger a regulatory response from the international community to prevent further erosion of the right to religious freedom.

Who Will Be Responsible for the Disappearing Islands in the Pacific?

December 8, 2018

by Kate Juon

For many island nations, climate change is the biggest threat: the ocean has begun to swallow up peoples' homes. Because of this, island nations in the Pacific have made considerable strides to combat rising sea levels and have been at the [forefront of international climate change negotiations](#), all while accounting for nearly [zero percent of the global emissions](#). Though these countries are striving to make their islands livable into the future, their efforts may not be enough. [Land continues to disappear](#) in nations like the Solomon Islands, devastating the ecosystems and the [livelihood of its people](#). Increasingly, weather patterns caused by climate change are forcing citizens of island nations to flee their communities, becoming some of the first of an estimated [250 million people likely to be displaced](#) by 2050.

The [1951 UN Refugee Convention](#) did not anticipate “climate refugees.” To qualify for asylum, refugees must be unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin because of a “well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.” Therefore, member countries may legally deny asylum claims founded in climate change. New Zealand, for example, has previously [denied asylum to Kiribati nationals](#) claiming that their sinking island home is unlivable.

In 2016, the Paris Agreement on climate change took effect to promote and incentivize the [mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions \(GGE\)](#). Under the agreement, ratifying countries agreed to support the needs of developing countries, many of whom are the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. As of July 2018, [179 countries have ratified the Agreement](#), which provides financial resources to assist developing nations to mitigate GGE and adapt to the effects of climate change. Yet, despite huge disparities between nations and their share of global emissions, responsibility remains equally shared. Despite the fact that developed nations have historically been responsible for [seventy-nine percent of carbon emissions](#), there has been no mention of liability or specific compensation to disproportionately affected parties like island nations.

However, some countries have adopted limited resettlement programs. For example, New Zealand has a yearly “[Pacific Access Category](#)” lottery for seventy-five migrants each from Kiribati, Tuvalu, Tonga, and Fiji, and the U.S.’s [I-9 work permit allows indefinite employment eligibility](#) for citizens of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, and Palau. Yet such programs are not scaled to accept larger magnitudes of people. These programs also ignore the sad reality that many people [do not want to leave](#) their homes. However, as coral reefs degrade and islands continue to sink deeper, these same people become increasingly [more vulnerable](#) as the ocean sweeps away homes and food supplies.

As sea levels rise and storms become more powerful, climate change has already become a “[matter of life or death](#)” to all. Some nations like the Seychelles have taken matters into their own hands as formal climate negotiations have proved slow and cumbersome. With the implementation of a [debt buyback program](#), Seychelles began working on a climate change adaptation program. However, such projects and other infrastructure fortification [programs like the Green Climate Fund’s project](#) in the Maldives continue to disregard the imminent future of their nationals.

But the bigger question is: why must island nations bear the burden of responsibility when other countries are the main contributors to climate change? The Trump Administration’s [threat to withdraw](#) from the Paris Agreement, implementation of stricter [immigration policies](#), and continued [denial](#) of human-caused climate change all indicate that any action from the U.S. is extremely unlikely. Although the U.S. will be unable to leave the Agreement until [2020](#) at the earliest and is thereby still obligated to mitigate its impact on GGE, the continued lack of provisions protecting climate refugees make it difficult to hold polluters accountable.

The international community cannot continue to postpone the issue of climate refugees. If polluter countries do not want to be accountable for such refugees, they must take drastic measures. Some countries have taken charge while others continue to ignore its duties. For example, France recently passed a law that requires large companies to [publish annual reports](#) linking its supply chain’s activities to environmental impact and allows civil society to sue companies. Whereas, in the U.S., companies cannot be sued for GGE under federal law as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is still the authority to enforce the [Clean Air Act under *American Electric Power Co. v. Connecticut*](#). Unsurprisingly, the current administration has [continued to ignore its duties as inspector](#).

Perhaps the best solution is to hold these companies accountable since [private companies such as fossil fuel entities](#) are the most responsible for the GGE of each polluter country. It may be time to allow the public and other concerned parties to bring their issues to court. The main polluters should be held accountable and—more importantly—liable. It is no longer a question of *if*. We must ask ourselves: *when* the islands disappear, where will the people go?