

Conflict Weekly

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The UN report on Xinjiang: Four Takeaways

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UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet released the assessment of human rights concerns in Xinjiang. (Image Source: <https://www.ohchr.org/>)

The UN report on Xinjiang: Four Takeaways

On 31 August, the UN Human Rights Office released the “OHCHR Assessment of human rights concerns in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, People’s Republic of China.” The Assessment asserts that serious human rights violations in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in the context of the Chinese government’s application of counter-terrorism and counter-extremism measures. The violations include torture, forced medical treatments, sexual and gender-based violence against predominantly Uyghurs (comprising largely of Sunni Muslims) and other Muslim ethnic minorities in XUAR.

Following are the four major takeaways from the report.

1. China’s heavy-handed approach to XUAR and Uyghurs

The Assessment reveals a gradual increase in the Chinese government’s heavy-handed approach to XUAR. In a 2019 White Paper, the government responded to a UN query on the

riots in 2009 in the regional capital. The government claimed that “separatist, terrorist and extremist forces” had killed civilians and police officers in thousands of attacks from 1990 to 2016. The White Paper claimed that Xinjiang had destroyed thousands of violent and terrorist gangs, punished people for “illegal religious activities” and confiscated copies of “illegal religious materials” under the “Strike Hard” campaign. The government believed its measures were successful and declared that since 2016, there have not been any terrorist incidents in XUAR. Prior to the White Paper, a XUAR Regulation on De-extremification (XRD) in 2017 listed and prohibited 15 “primary expressions of extremification.” The Assessment, however, says the said expressions fall within the purview of fundamental freedoms, including having a beard or women wearing a hijab. The Assessment is therefore critical of the vague language by the government used in framing policies towards XUAR, which are seemingly targeting the Muslims.

2. Concerns over re-education camps

The report outlines the emergence of Vocational Education and Training Centres (VETC) or re-education camps, facilitated by the 2018 amendment of the Xinjiang Implementing Measures for the PRC Counterterrorism Law (XIM). The purported aim of the re-education camps is to deradicalise and rehabilitate persons previously influenced by extremism. Three categories of people can be placed in the VETCs; first, those convicted for terrorism or extremism; second, people who were coerced into participating in terrorist or extremist acts or those who participated in such acts in situations not serious enough to constitute a crime; third, people who participated in terrorist or extremist activities that were a real threat but did not cause harm. China claims that the VETCs, which it describes as “schools by nature,” have ceased operations since 2019. The Assessment raises several concerns regarding VETCs. First, though the VETCs were established in 2018, people were referred to the facilities as early as 2017. Second, the reasons for referrals to VETCs violate a person’s fundamental freedoms. Third, a person’s ability to appeal against a decision on their detention in a VETC is either quite limited or non-existent.

3. Human rights situation in camps

The Assessment quotes interviewees who were detained in VETCs. The experiences outlined by people who were detained in VETCs indicate that they were tortured and subjected to brutal mistreatment during interrogation. Accounts of torture include being strapped to a chair and being beaten with batons and even electric batons while strapped in a so-called “tiger chair”, prolonged solitary confinement, sleep deprivation, ensuring that those at the VETCs could not pray or speak their language, compulsory political teaching and singing patriotic songs until the inmates faces were red with veins popping out, administering of pills causing drowsiness and sexual humiliation such as forced nudity and sexual violence including instances of rape.

4. Lack of compliance with international law

The Assessment concludes that China has not abided by its commitments and obligations under international human rights law. For example, the Assessment reiterates that international law calls for States to implement counter-terrorism laws while respecting human rights. The Assessment further outlines that placing persons in the VETCs deprives them of their liberty and violates Article 9 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, protecting against arbitrary detention. Beijing’s actions and measures being implemented in XUAR also violate freedom of religion and emphasise that campaigns like Strike Hard are discriminatory toward minorities.

Although the assessment by the United Nations on the violation of human rights in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region in China is new, numerous countries and international organizations have raised their concerns about the situation on various occasions during the last decade.

Other recent reports on Xinjiang

Besides the United Nations report on Xinjiang, countries have published their own reports to address the Uyghur issue in Xinjiang.

International Religious Freedom Report by the Office of International Religious Freedom of US Department of State (2019)

The Office of International Religious Freedom is a bureau under the US Department of State. It monitors religious persecution and discrimination worldwide, recommends and implements policies in respective regions or countries, and develops programs to promote religious freedom. The report examined the state of international religious freedom. A part of the report focused on the violation of religious freedom in Xinjiang. The report highlighted the religious demography in the region and observed that 63 percent of the population in Xinjiang belonged to a minority. Second, the government recognized five official religions – Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism. Despite recognizing Islam as one of the religions, there were numerous restrictions such as bans on long beards, full-face coverings, interference in family planning, weddings and other cultural practices. Third, the US report observed that the Chinese government underlined ethnic separatism, religious extremism, and violent terrorism as the “three evils,” and individuals suspected of being involved in any of the above were detained and punished by the state.

The Global Engagement Center's report on manipulation of global public opinion on Xinjiang

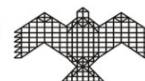
The Global Engagement Center is an interagency entity at the US State Department. It is charged with coordinating US counterterrorism messaging to foreign audiences. In August 2022, the Global Engagement Centre of the US Department of State also published a report titled “PRC Efforts To Manipulate Global Public Opinion on Xinjiang.” The report claimed that China’s actions in Xinjiang and on issues related to Xinjiang aimed to discredit independent reporting while flooding the media with the Chinese government’s narratives instead. The report accused China of using messengers to drown the truth, disguising the people’s torture, using AI to create an alternative reality, silencing dissent, and use of transnational repression, cyberbullying and trolling.

Foreign Affairs Committee of the British Parliament’s report on “The UK’s Responsibility to Act on Atrocities in Xinjiang and Beyond”

The Foreign Affairs Committee of the British Parliament is one of the many select committees that produce a wide range of publications, including reports and records of evidence sessions and debates. In July 2021, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the British Parliament published the “The UK’s Responsibility to Act on Atrocities in Xinjiang and Beyond” report and called on countries to boycott the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics. The report emphasized the forced labour programmes, arbitrary detention in re-education camps, cultural erasure, torture, systemic rape, forced sterilisations, and high-tech surveillance of the community. The report focused on the loss of the Uyghur diaspora and culture due to the inappropriate application of China’s anti-terrorism policies, the extensive forced labour in the camps, and the use of technology and research by the Chinese government to suppress members of the Uyghur community. The report recommended the appointment of a Special Envoy on Atrocity Prevention to ensure the country’s responsibility towards protecting human rights worldwide.

Canadian Foreign Ministry's trade restrictions on Xinjiang

In January 2021, the Foreign Minister of Canada expressed the country’s concerns regarding the human rights situation in Xinjiang and announced measures to address the same. Canada adopted a comprehensive approach to prevent the sale of goods produced from forced labour



and thereby avoid being a part of the human rights abuse in the region. The process called for seven actions: prohibition of goods made in Xinjiang, pledging to the Xinjiang Integrity Declaration for Canadian companies, providing a business advisory on Xinjiang-related entities, providing enhanced advice to Canadian businesses, imposition of export controls, increasing awareness for Responsible Business Conduct linked with Xinjiang, and studying the supply chain risks linked with the forced labour.

European Union resolution on “Forced labour and the situation of the Uyghurs in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region”

On 17 December 2020, the Parliament of the European Union adopted the resolution on forced labour and the situation of the Uyghur community in the Xinjiang region. The report accused China of forceful labour and exploitation of minorities. The Parliament strongly condemned the government’s actions while demanding an end to the arbitrary detention, shutting down all camps and ceasing the government-sponsored mass sterilization.

Japanese Diet resolution on Serious Human Rights Situation in Xinjiang

In February 2022, Japan’s lower house passed the resolution proposed by four members of the house. First, the resolution expressed the Japanese concerns about the human rights situation of the Uyghurs and the other minorities in the Xinjiang region. Second, the resolution also shed light on the infringement of freedom and forceful confinement of individuals, not just in Xinjiang, but also in Tibet, Inner Mongolia, and Hong Kong. Third, the resolution further promised that Japan will take a firm stand on the issue by adopting a substantive and solid political document and urged the international community to monitor the situation while offering help to those in need.

Australian Strategic Policy Institute’s (ASPI) Xinjiang Data Project

ASPI is an independent, non-partisan think tank that produces expert and timely advice for Australia’s strategic and defence leaders. The Xinjiang Data Project of the ASPI was supported by the US government’s State Department and aimed at bridging the information gap on the issue. The focus of the study was mass internment camps, surveillance and emerging technologies, forced labour and supply chains, the ‘re-education’ campaign, deliberate cultural destruction and other human rights abuses. As a part of the project, the ASPI released a number of reports on the Communist Party’s influence operations, the repression of the minorities, the re-education programmes and the surveillance and detention systems, and more.

China’s responses

China has always responded criticism of its policies in the Xinjiang region with the utmost disdain and urged countries to refrain from interfering in the country’s internal affairs. On 2 September, China’s Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian responded to thereport by the United Nations and called it a “patchwork of disinformation” that serves as a tool for the US and other western powers. The Spokesperson furthermore declared the report to be illegal and invalid, calling the Assessment biased. China promised to pursue human rights development with Chinese characteristics only and not get influenced by the Western definition of human rights. Immediately after the United Nations published the Assessment, China rejected the document with a release of a 131-page refutation. The Foreign Ministry also claimed that more than 60 countries had sent a joint letter of opposition to the OHCHR along with 100 other non-governmental organizations.

Also, from around the world

By Avishka Ashok, Joel Jacob, Sai Pranav, Sruthi Sadhasivam, Akriti Sharma, Vijay Anand, Abigail Miriam Fernandez, Rashmi BR, Anu Maria Joseph, Harini Madhusudan, Rishma Banerjee, Padmashree Anandhan and Ankit Singh

East and Southeast Asia

Taiwan: French lawmakers visit Taipei after Pelosi

On 7 September, a group of French lawmakers visited Taiwan, marking the first high-level European delegation to visit Taiwan since US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi met with President Tsai Ing-wen in Taipei. China had conducted weeks-long military drills as a reaction to Pelosi's visit and has condemned the act vehemently. The French delegation's visit was France's fourth visit in the past four months.

Hong Kong: President of the Hong Kong Journalists Association detained

On 7 September, the President of Hong Kong's Journalists Association (HKJA), Ronson Chan, was arrested weeks before he planned on leaving the city and starting his fellowship at Oxford University. Chan was arrested for obstructing a police officer and causing disorder in a public place. Hong Kong has been witnessing increased arrests of journalists and academics since the National Security Law's implementation three years ago.

Japan: Russia conducts military exercise with China near disputed islands

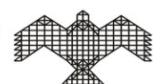
On 6 September, Russian President Vladimir Putin inspected the Vostok 2022 military exercise, a day after Japan objected against Moscow for conducting the exercise close to a group of islands claimed by Tokyo. Japan recently followed the US in sanctioning Russia for its actions in Ukraine. The Japanese Defence Ministry observed that three Russian vessels, two Chinese ships and one Chinese destroyer had sailed in the Japanese sea 190 kilometres off the country's northernmost frontier. The ministry announced that the country would continue to keep a watch on the military exercises. The Russian military is also increasing the magnitude of the military exercise.

Myanmar: Military air strikes across the Myanmar – Bangladesh Border

On 5 September, the Myanmar military launched airstrikes after the ethnic Rakhine armed organization the Arakan Army (AA) seized a police outpost on the Myanmar-Bangladesh border in Maungdaw Township in northern Rakhine State. At least two rockets fired by regime aircraft landed inside Bangladesh. News sources confirmed that the airstrikes could also be seen from the Bangladeshi side of the border. It also stated that Lt-Col Fayzur Rahman of Border Guard Bangladesh had deployed troops to the area amid reports that Myanmar's military was violating Bangladeshi airspace to carry out attacks on the AA. Bangladesh's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has summoned Myanmar's ambassador to the country three times in the last two weeks to express Bangladesh's deep concern at air and artillery strikes landing inside Bangladeshi territory and violations of the country's air space.

Taiwan: US authorises USD 1.1 billion weapons deal

On 2 September, the Pentagon's Defence Security Cooperation Agency announced the potential sale of USD 1.1 billion of military equipment to Taiwan, including , "60 anti-ship missiles, 100 air-to-air missiles and contractor logistics support for a surveillance radar programme.". The announcement comes in the wake of 2 Chinese fighter jets cutting across the median line of the Taiwan Strait, an informally recognised barrier between Taiwan and China. China has called on the US to end its arms sale to Taiwan. Last week, Taiwan fired at a Chinese drone, hovering near Kinmen islands. The US State Department spokesperson, Ned Price said: "The US will



continue to support a peaceful resolution of cross-Strait issues, consistent with the wishes and best interests of the people of Taiwan.”

Myanmar: Ambassador called over artillery strikes in Bangladeshi territory

On 4 September, Bangladesh’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the 3rd time demanded the presence of Myanmar’s Ambassador to Bangladesh, U Aung Kyaw Moe, to express the country’s grievances over Myanmar’s rockets alighting in the Chattogram hill district of Bandarban, a region in proximity to Bangladeshi territory. Bangladesh also complained that Myanmar violated its land and air space. In a press release, Bangladesh’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said: “During the meeting, the ambassador was also told that such activities are of grave threat to the safety and security of peace-loving people, a violation of the border agreement between Bangladesh and Myanmar and contrary to the relationship of good neighbors.” Previously, in the wake of the insurgent group Arakan Army’s (AA) seizure of a police outpost across the border, the Myanmar’s military retaliated by launching rockets which ended up alighting on Bangladesh’s soil. In the past, Bangladesh’s Home Minister, Asaduzzaman Khan, claimed that Myanmar’s military undertook such attacks to drive out the rebels to Bangladesh.

Malaysia: Foreign minister urges ASEAN to ramp up the peace process in Myanmar

On 5 September, Malaysia’s foreign minister, Saifuddin Abdullah, urged ASEAN to address the grave humanitarian situation in Myanmar and implement the 5-point peace plan. As the minister failed to receive reports regarding Myanmar’s situation in the aftermath of the ASEAN meeting in Cambodia, the foreign minister enquired about the situation in Myanmar to ASEAN’s Secretary-General. The foreign minister, Abdullah, suggested convening a separate team to monitor the Myanmar conflict for quick disposal of issues. With regards to engaging with Myanmar, the foreign minister, Abdullah said: "Do we continue with the junta? Or do we work without the junta and support the people who we know are doing good work? These are big questions, and we have to decide urgently."

Solomon Islands: Indemnity to Australia and New Zealand from vessel ban

On 5 September, the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, Manasseh Sogavare, claimed that Navy vessels of Australia and New Zealand will be provided indemnity to access the country’s ports. Sogavare assured the exemption of those military vessels stationed as part of the Solomon Islands International Assistance Force (SIIAF), a treaty that involves the engagement of Fiji, Australia and New Zealand with Solomon Island’s police forces. Recently, the US coastguard vessel and a British navy vessel, on a mission to scrutinise illegal fishing failed to refuel in Honiara as Solomon Islands issued a foreign vessel ban. The Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, Manasseh Sogavare, claimed that the ban was imposed after examining the possible threats and gains of foreign military vessel visits to the country. The developments take place with the increasing presence of the West, which can be attributed to the growing influence of China, the latter recently signed a security pact with the Solomon Islands.

Philippines: Rescue and joint operations with US coast guard ends

On 4 September, the two-day “Joint search and rescue drills” conducted by Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) along with the United States Coast Guard, held 24 nautical miles southwest of Mariveles, Bataan came to a close. The joint operations between the two countries involved “sea-phase demonstrations and anti-piracy exercises.” Some of the drills that were conducted involved “communication exercises, manoeuvring drills, photo exercises, decoding messages through flag hoisting, flashing exercises, publication exercises, small boat operations, boarding operations, search and rescue exercises and medical assistance.” The states’ rescue missions were simulated, and they also undertook anti-piracy exercises. The PCG Commandant

Admiral, Artemio M Abu said: “piracy is a high sea and universal crime where cooperation among Coast Guard counterparts is crucial to achieving success.”

South Korea: Typhoon Hinnamnor strikes, leaving 11 people dead and one missing

On 7 September, the casualties of typhoon Hinnamnor were updated by the Central Disaster Safety Relief at 3 pm. Typhoon Hinnamnor left 11 people dead, three injured, and one missing. Pohang in North Gyeongsang Province was hit the hardest, with nine killed and one missing due to the storms and floods caused by the typhoon. Roads were destroyed, buildings and houses were submerged, and landslides occurred. An underground parking lot was flooded in the city of Pohang, in which seven died and two were rescued. Gyeongju also was affected by the typhoon resulting in the death of an 80-year-old woman. In Ulsan, a man in his 20s was found dead. President Yoon Suk-yeol designated Pohang and Gyeongju as special disaster zones to help the recovery process.

South Asia

Afghanistan: Suicide bombing attack near the Russian embassy

On 5 September, the Russian Embassy in Kabul witnessed a suicide attack that killed at least six people present at the scene. The attacker killed two employees of the Russian Embassy. The bomber was killed on the spot by Taliban security guards at the embassy entrance, but it is still not established if the explosives went off before he was shot or due to the shooting. Although an attack on a foreign diplomatic mission in Afghanistan is rare, the authorities still consider it a tough blow to their security assurances.

Afghanistan: Bombing at Herat mosque kills 18

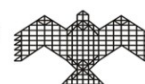
On 2 September, Afghanistan reported another mosque bombing that killed 18 civilians, including a high-profile pro-Taliban cleric, Mujib Rahman Ansari. The bombing took place outside the Gazargah mosque in the city of Herat before the Friday prayer. Allegedly a suicide blast, this bombing is another in the series of killings of prominent pro-Taliban personalities in the country. Although no one has claimed responsibility for the attack, the Islamic State had previously released a video threatening the cleric.

Myanmar: Court sentences Suu Kyi to three years in prison for election fraud

On 2 September, Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi was given three more years in jail after being judged guilty on charges of election fraud. The closed-door trial took place in Nay Pyi Taw, and Suu Kyi’s lawyer was barred from speaking to the journalists. The new sentence includes hard labour and adds to her current prison years, which could go up to 200 if she is found guilty on all pending charges. These closed-door trials under the new rule of the military are considered politically motivated and have been condemned by several rights groups.

Pakistan: WHO warns of the worsening humanitarian situation amid floods

On 3 September, the World Health Organisation (WHO) warned about the worsening of the humanitarian situation in flood-ravaged Pakistan. The report stated that over 1290 people had lost their lives, with over 33 million affected, including over 6.4 million in dire need of humanitarian aid. The report added that over 1460 health facilities were affected, of which 432 were fully damaged and 1,028 were partially damaged, while access to health facilities, healthcare workers, and essential medicines and medical supplies has become limited. According to WHO spokesperson Tarik Jasarevic, diseases are already circulating in Pakistan, alongside Covid-19, HIV and polio, and “now all these are at risk of getting worse.” Further, he added: “The food insecurity is going to be huge because the crops are devastated, obviously, and the little they had in terms of livestock is also destroyed.”



Afghanistan: Five highschools reopen for girls in Paktia province

On 7 September, Tolo News reported that five highschools for girls were reopened by tribal elders in Afghanistan's eastern province of Paktia as the school year began on 6 September. The head of the Information and Cultural Directorate in Paktia said that few schools have opened in the province, however, they have not received an official order regarding this matter. This development comes as secondary schools for girls have been closed in Afghanistan for over a year.

Central Asia, Middle East and Africa

Armenia-Azerbaijan: Yerevan accuses Baku of killing its conscript at the border

On 6 September, Armenia's Ministry of Defense claimed that one of its conscripts was killed at a combat post along Azerbaijan border. The ministry accused Azerbaijani forces of the killing. However, Azerbaijan's Ministry of Defense denied these allegations saying the Armenian report was a "lie" and its units did not open fire on the border. This comes amid the recent skirmishes along their border and the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Yemen: Al-Qaeda attack in Abyan

On 6 September, Al-Qaeda militants attacked a military checkpoint in the Ahwar district of Abyan province in southern Yemen. Mohammed al-Naqib, the Southern Transitional Council (STC) spokesperson, said that the terrorists used machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades, and military vehicles to attack the checkpoint manned by the Security Belt Forces. The attack and subsequent fighting lasted for hours and resulted in the death of 26 people, including 20 soldiers aligned to the STC and six terrorists.

Syria: Israel strikes the Aleppo airport

On 6 September, Israel conducted strikes on the Aleppo international airport in northern Syria, targeting a warehouse used by Iran-backed militia. The missile strike, the second in a week, was launched from the Mediterranean Sea. SANA, the Syrian news agency, said that the attack resulted in material damage only. However, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights confirmed that three people were killed. The attack rendered the airport unserviceable, and all flights were diverted to Damascus.

Iraq: PMF destroys Daesh stronghold in Mosul

On 3 September, the Iran-backed Popular Mobilization Front (PMF) forces destroyed a Daesh stronghold in the west of the city of Mosul. The PMF said that the hideout was located in the Adaiya Mountains and was zeroed in on through a security operation. It housed the terrorist outfit's documents, technical equipment and logistic-related materials."

Ethiopia: Conflict resumes in Tigray; violence spreads to multiple regions

On 1 September, Tigray forces accused the government and its Eritrean allies of launching "massive offensives" in Ethiopia's north-west region. The same day, the government called the TPLF a "terrorist group" and said "the duty of halting from its destructive activities has fallen on the government and people of Ethiopia." On 2 September, residents in western Ethiopia said that at least 55 people were killed in the Oromia region. They claim that the Fano militia-affiliated with the Amhara ethnic group is responsible for the attack. As the civil war in the northern part of the country has resumed, ending a five-months truce, violent attacks keep erupting in various parts of the country. The UN and the US have raised concerns and called for an "immediate ceasefire." Meanwhile, UK's Africa minister, Vicky Ford, said: "The return of fighting in Ethiopia's civil war is catastrophic for the people of Ethiopia. The renewed conflict risks deepening the already dire humanitarian situation. Twenty-two months since fighting first began, it is clear that there is no military solution."

Somalia: UN says around 730 children died of malnutrition

On 6 September, Africanews reported, that the United Nations said that around 730 children have died in nutrition centres across Somalia since January. It warned that the true figure could be much higher as the situation in the country has escalated to a severe famine. Wafaa Saeed, the Somalia representative for the UN children's agency UNICEF, said: "Malnutrition has reached an unprecedented level. Around 730 children are reported to have died in nutrition centres across the country." She added that nearly 1.5 million children, nearly half of them, aged under five are at risk of acute malnutrition. Among which, 385,000 needed treatments for severe acute malnutrition. In June, the World Bank estimated that nearly 66.4 million people in the Horn of Africa are experiencing food crises and food emergencies. Affected by the worst drought in 40 years and failed consecutive rainy seasons added with global food crisis after the Ukraine war has exacerbated the condition in the region.

Burkina Faso: 35 killed in IED blast

On 5 September, 35 civilians were killed and 37 injured in northern Burkina Faso in an IED explosion. The victims were traveling to the capital city, Ouagadougou, in a convoy escorted by the army when one of the vehicles ran over an IED between Djibo and Bourzanga. The development comes after 15 soldiers were killed in a double IED blast in early August in the same area.

Europe and the Americas

Europe: Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia restrict the entry of Russian citizens

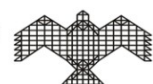
On 8 September, EU member states, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia agreed to ban the entry of Russian citizens from Russia or Belarus to their countries. Exceptions will only be made for humanitarian and family reasons, lorry drivers, and diplomats. The announcement comes after several weeks of deliberations by EU countries regarding the increase in applications for Schengen Visas by Russian tourists. On the increasing border crossing by Russians, Latvia's Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics said, "...This is becoming a public security issue, this is also an issue of a moral and political nature." Among the three countries, Estonia already had a softer ban in place, whereby it had only barred the entry of Russians with Schengen visas issued by Estonian authorities.

Ukraine: Water Contamination at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear site

On 6 September, the head of administration at Energodar revealed that the latest round of shelling by Ukrainian forces at the nuclear power plant has caused a fuel oil leak. The strikes led by Ukrainian troops are said to have hit a fuel oil tank which leaked into a channel supplying water to the Zaporizhzhia plant following which, the specialists had to work in the area to stop the leak. Additionally, the officials also claimed that the Kiev's forces continued strikes despite the presence of IAEA Inspectors at the facility.

Ukraine: IAEA Report and Moscow response

On 6 September, the report from the IAEA inspection at the Zaporizhzhia power plant was released. Moscow's UN envoy described his disappointment at the IAEA authorities' refusal to say who is shelling the plant. The IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi, who personally led the team of inspectors, said in a statement to CNN that the determination of who is shelling is beyond the mandate of the IAEA and that it would require enormous capabilities to monitor the situation. On 7 September, Putin made a statement at the East Economic Forum, and putting it on record that he trusts the IAEA report, while praising the agency for its professional leadership and for being a responsible international organisation.



The Netherlands: Dutch agriculture minister resigns as protests rage on

On 6 September, Netherlands' Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality Minister, Henk Staghouwer, resigned following a series of protests by the country's farmers. The lucrative agriculture sector has been in crisis since 2019 after a court ruling slashed emissions of nitrogen oxide and ammonia produced by livestock by 50 per cent by 2030. Fearing significant downsizing or closure of their livestock farms many farmers have been protesting the ruling. Before submitting his resignation, Staghouwer, who has largely been unsuccessful in dealing with the protests, said that he was not the right person for the job. Prime Minister Mark Rutte tweeted his appreciation for him and said he respected Staghouwer's decision to step down. Former Dutch Agricultural Minister Carola Schouten will temporarily take up the office.

Russia: Gazprom stops gas supply to Germany indefinitely

On 2 September, Russia's Gazprom cited a gas leak and stopped gas flow to Germany via the Nord Stream 1 pipeline indefinitely. The gas leak was allegedly found at the main gas turbine at the Portovaya compressor station near St. Petersburg. Initially, the supplies were to be suspended from 31 August to 2 September for routine maintenance. However, currently, the shutdown has been extended and Gazprom has provided no time frame for restoring operations. On 5 September, Russia's spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, gave a clear indication about Russia forcing the West to lift their sanctions. He said that if the West wants the gas supply to be resumed, they will have to lift the sanctions.

Colombia: Police officers killed in an ambush

On 3 September, seven police officers were killed in an explosion and shooting attack in Colombia. They were leaving a social event in the southwestern department of Huila when their vehicle hit a road mine. It is the worst attack on security forces since former guerrilla Gustavo Petro was sworn in as Colombia's first left-wing president less than a month ago. According to the national police and attorney general's office, three of the officers who were killed were aged 20 or younger. President Petro condemned the attack, calling it "a clear act of sabotage against peace" in a tweet.

Argentina: Protestors rally against assassination attempt against the Vice President

On 2 September, after the Vice President of Argentina, Cristina Fernandez, escaped an assassination attempt, thousands of supporters went to the streets to show solidarity with the Vice President. Fernández faced corruption charges in a twelve-year-old policy, an illicit scheme that siphoned state funds through the awarding of public works contracts to a family friend. Javier Farje, a political analyst, said: "The shock in Argentina society is so huge that it might help her ironically to regain some of the popularity that she might have lost among people who do not agree with her."

Canada: Saskatchewan stabbing spree leaves ten dead and eighteen injured

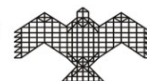
On 4 September, in the territory of James Smith Cree Nation, two brothers went on a stabbing spree and terrorized the First Nation community. The mass stabbing was one of the deadliest acts of violence to hit the country. In a video address, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said the attacks were shocking and that over these past years, tragedies like these have become all too commonplace.

Jamaica: Fact finding team to visit Canada after allegations of exploitation by contract laborers

On 2 September, Jamaica appointed a “special fact-finding team” to investigate the working conditions of Jamaicans employed on Canadian farms, after workers in the province of Ontario said last month that they faced “exploitation at a seismic level.” The workers are in Canada under a temporary migrant labour programme that began in 1966 as an agreement between Canada and Jamaica. Since then it has expanded to include 10 other Caribbean countries and Mexico. SAWP allows Canadian employers to hire temporary migrant workers to fill gaps in the agricultural labour market.

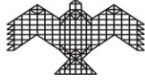
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National Institute of
Advanced Studies



About NIAS-International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI)

The International Peace Research Initiative (IPRI), initiated in 2018 at the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), is a part of the Conflict Resolution and Peace Research Programme at the School of Conflict and Security Studies.

IPRI undertakes research on various issues relating to peace with special emphasis on radicalisation, sustainable peace, gender roles in peacebuilding and global protest movements. IPRI research are published as briefs, reports and commentary.

About Konrad Adenauer Stiftung

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) is a political foundation. Established in 1955 as “Society for Christian-Democratic Civic Education,” in 1964, the Foundation proudly took on the name of Konrad Adenauer, the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. KAS cooperates with governmental institutions, political parties and civil society organizations, building strong partnerships along the way. In particular, KAS seeks to intensify political cooperation in the area of development cooperation on the foundations of its objectives and values. Together with the partners, KAS makes a significant contribution to the creation of a global order that empowers every country to determine its own developmental priorities and destiny in an internationally responsible manner.

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About Conflict Weekly

The Conflict Weekly an academic endeavour to bring every Wednesday/Thursday a weekly analysis of the conflict and peace processes in the world; aiming to look at the larger peace picture. It is published by the NIAS-IPRI in collaboration with the KAS India Office.

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