

The Role of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to Tackle Discrimination against Uighur Muslims by the Chinese Government in Xinjiang

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Abstract

The Uighur are a minority Muslim group living in Xinjiang, China. Muslims Uighur are prohibited from performing religious rituals in mosques and praying by the Chinese government. Human rights violations committed against Uighur Muslims such as being prohibited in freedom of expression, barriers to education and discrimination against Uighur still occur in Xinjiang, China. Therefore, this paper will analyze the efforts of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) as an organization that assists in resolving conflicts in Muslim countries and liberating Muslim rights to contribute to the prevention, management, and resolution of world conflicts that can make their efforts to free discrimination among Muslim Uighur. In this study the researcher using the theory of the role of international organizations from several experts. At the same time in this study using a qualitative method with a descriptive approach through books, journals, or news related to Uighur Muslim issues. The type of data collected also uses secondary data from several studies that have been conducted. The OIC has coordinated and dialogued with the Chinese government through a meeting of the OIC Secretariat General with the delegate of China to report the OIC's direct visit to Xinjiang but this has not freed Uighur Muslims. Some of the efforts made by the OIC are still hampered because of the foreign policy response carried out by the Chinese government so that the OIC's movement against Uighur Muslims is limited.

Keywords: discrimination, OIC, Uighur Muslim

Abstrak

Uighur merupakan kelompok minoritas Muslim yang tinggal di Xinjiang, China. Muslim Uighur dilarang melakukan ritual keagamaan di masjid dan sholat oleh pemerintah China. Pelanggaran HAM yang dilakukan oleh pemerintah China terhadap Muslim Uighur seperti larangan kebebasan berekspresi, hambatan pendidikan, dan diskriminasi terhadap Uighur masih terjadi di Xinjiang. Oleh karena itu, tulisan ini akan menganalisis upaya Organisasi Kerjasama Islam (OKI) sebagai organisasi yang membantu penyelesaian konflik di negara-negara Muslim dan membebaskan hak-hak Muslim untuk berkontribusi dalam pencegahan, pengelolaan, dan penyelesaian konflik dunia yang dapat melakukan upaya mereka untuk membebaskan diskriminasi di kalangan Muslim Uighur. Dalam penelitian ini peneliti menggunakan teori peran organisasi internasional dari beberapa ahli. Sedangkan dalam penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif melalui buku, jurnal, atau berita yang berkaitan dengan isu Muslim Uighur. Jenis data yang dikumpulkan juga menggunakan data sekunder dari beberapa penelitian yang telah dilakukan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa OKI telah melakukan usaha melalui beberapa pertemuan internal untuk merespon kebijakan-kebijakan yang dikeluarkan oleh pemerintah China terkait Uighur dengan mencari solusi yang tepat untuk pembebasan diskriminasi dan juga OKI melakukan mediasi dan negosiasi langsung bersama dengan pemerintah China terkait masalah Uighur. Namun, dari beberapa usaha yang telah dilakukan oleh OIC masih mengalami hambatan karena respon politik luar negeri yang dilakukan oleh pemerintah China melalui kebijakan internal dengan memperkuat pertahanan militer dan ekonomi untuk mempertahankan integritas pemerintahan China di Xinjiang sehingga pergerakan OKI terhadap Muslim Uighur menjadi terbatas.

Kata kunci: diskriminasi, OIC, Muslim Uighur

INTRODUCTION

The Uighur Muslims are minority group living in the northwestern part of mainland China in the province of Xinjiang, which is the largest region in China. These Uighur have ethnic Turks living in Xinjiang as the largest region in the country. Xinjiang is an autonomous region that in theory has a kind of self-government because the location is far from Beijing's control (Hughes, 2018). The Chinese Bureau of Statistics reports that from the October 2020 census data, the Uighur Muslim population in China has reached 25.85 million, or an increase of 4.04 million compared to the 2010 population census, and also the Uighur Muslim ethnic minority in Xinjiang has increased to 44.96 percent in 2020 (Antara, 2021). The majority of Uighur are Sunni Muslims, but physically the Uighur have almost a similarity with the Turks, and the language they use is Arabic. Data statistics on the Chinese minority are very limited in China, according to available data statistics suggesting that Uighur have a shorter life expectancy, lower levels of education, and high unemployment rates than the Han Chinese who make up the majority in China (Kaltman, 2007). Minorities become a political issue when they fight against equal rights or the oppression they experience as a minority so that this demand or resistance gets support from other parties or countries (Fathoni, 2017).

Not only that, Uighur in Xinjiang are prohibited from carrying out worship activities, as Muslim Uighur are prohibited from performing religious rituals in mosques and praying by the Chinese government. Then, human rights violations committed against Uighur Muslims such as being prohibited in freedom of expression, barriers to education and discrimination against Uighur still occur in Xinjiang, China (Saragih, 2015). There have been several international organizations that play a role in liberating Uighur Muslims, one of them is Human Rights Watch (HRW) as an

international organization engaged in the humanitarian sector, provides its support for enforcement of human rights violations that have occurred in Xinjiang, China to Muslim Uighurs advocacy to expose the atrocities committed by the Chinese government against Uighur Muslims. Human Rights Watch (HRW) uses a soft power approach or does not use military force in its advocacy efforts. In this case, Human Rights Watch (HRW) has realized this in the form of several reports entitled "Eradicating Ideological Viruses" China's Campaign of Repression against Xinjiang's Muslims", published on September 9, 2018. The report contains the results of direct interviews with victims of repressive actions by the Chinese government against ethnic Uighur previous 2015 entitled "Tyranny's False Comfort Why Rights Aren't Wrong in Tough Times". However, the advocacy that has been carried out, until the issuance of the HRW Report in September 2018 has not been able to influence the Chinese government's repressive policies, therefore there are several obstacles related to Human Rights Watch (HRW) advocacy efforts on discrimination against Uighur Muslims (Tristanty, 2020).

In addition, according to Amnesty International's report in 2018 entitled "*China Where are they? Time for Answers about mass detentions in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region*". In its report, Amnesty International confirmed that Chinese authorities have detained 1 million Uighur Muslims in *re-education* camp where Uighur Muslims are forced to learn Mandarin, memorize legal provisions and patriotic songs, if they refuse or violate the provisions, they will get punishment such as ranging from verbal abuse, food confiscation, imprisonment, beatings, and other types of torture. Therefore, this also makes the Chinese government's discrimination against Uighur Muslims even worse (Damayani, 2020).

Then from the UN Human Rights has also made official visits in 2021 to China including in the Xinjiang region, related to cases of human rights discrimination against Muslim Uighurs but this has not yet found a clear point regarding the exemption of discrimination against Muslim Uighurs (VOA News, 2021).

Therefore, the role of the OIC as an international organization based on Muslim countries is expected to help free discrimination against Uighur Muslims. This can be seen from some of the efforts made by the OIC in resolving international conflicts, especially in Muslim countries, one of which was the OIC's success in resolving the Iraq conflict because of the war between Sunnis and Shia in that country. The violence targets ordinary citizens, holy sites, mosques, cemeteries and residential areas so that serious OIC action is needed by reaching out to Sunni and Shia leaders and inviting them to reconciliation meetings in Mecca. OIC chose the months of Ramadan October 2006 and Mecca as the holiest months and places for Muslims. This religious dimension of time and place adds considerable moral pressure to the parties to create a cooperative attitude. The OIC's involvement in Iraqi sectarian violence has been very successful and has contributed to the achievement of peace in several countries (Sharqieh, 2012).

The role of an international organization is needed to act in liberating discrimination against Uighur Muslims. As has been done by Islamic countries that are members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which is the second-largest organization after the United Nations and has 57 member countries, where OIC is the best place to contribute to the prevention, management, and

resolution of world conflicts. Although experiencing a few obstacles, the OIC has succeeded in mediating a number of conflicts that have occurred, especially in member countries. However, the OIC has not yet reached its maximum potential in mediating and resolving international conflicts (Sharqieh, 2012). There have been some studies about how the role of OIC in fighting for freedom and fighting discrimination against Muslims. Among them, explaining how the OIC has an important role in the problem of oppression of Muslims in Palestine, it is proven that OIC can take steps for the advancement of Palestinian independence and shows its determination to stand with the Palestinian people (Hanif, 2014), Then there is research on how cooperation between Muslim countries through OIC in carrying out Islamic Law approaches to China for the liberation of Uighur Muslims (Kasim, Towadi, & Bakung, 2020) Through several studies have been carried out by other researchers related to the exemption of discrimination against Uighur Muslims. Making this topic an important thing to analyze through the role of the OIC as an organization of Muslim countries in the world to act in fighting for the rights of freedom of Uighur Muslims, this is due to the discovery of human rights violations in the form of restricting religious freedom experienced by Uighur Muslims, which was revealed by a delegation from the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) Muhyiddin Junaidi. Not only that, there are two reasons why Indonesia as a Muslim country is still silent on Uighur Muslims because Chinese investment is so large and many Indonesian Muslims do not believe in human rights violations in Xinjiang (Amindoni, 2019).



Source: BBC News, 2019.

Figure 1.

Satellite capture of alleged re-education camp in Xinjiang, China

However, none of these studies portrayed about the efforts of the OIC in liberating discrimination against Uighur Muslims according to the theory of international relations. Therefore, the purpose of writing this paper is to continue deeper research on the efforts of the OIC as a united international Islamic state organization for the freedom of discrimination against Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang, China. Figure 1, other discrimination by the Chinese government against Uighur Muslims is the detention of Uighur Muslims in a re-education camp in Xinjiang, where around one million people, mostly Uighur Muslims, are thought to have been detained without trial by being locked up, indoctrinated, and punished. They are also required to behave in accordance with the applicable rules such as having to prioritize Chinese language and Chinese culture, even though this is against their identity as Muslims (BBC News, 2019).

This makes human rights activists hope that European countries and countries with Muslim-majority

populations do not remain silent over the alleged oppression of the Chinese government against the Uighur ethnic minority in Xinjiang. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International also argue that other countries should not be afraid to confront the Chinese government regarding the exemption of ethnic discrimination against Uighur Muslims (CNN Indonesia, 2019). Then, OIC has held a meeting with the 15th Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC), they again echoed positive statements regarding the direct involvement of the OIC and the Chinese government in dealing with the issue of discrimination against Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang, this is OIC's constructive effort with a direct visit to Xinjiang, but they did not discuss the rights to freedom of religion and opinion (Damayani, 2020). Therefore, this study was conducted to describe the efforts of the OIC to exempt discrimination against Uighur Muslims.

Previously, Kasim, Towadi, & Bakung (2020) wrote about the implementation of Islamic legal principles by the OIC to carry

out its role in China on the Uighur issue. This study uses a normative juridical analysis method that explains the involvement of the relationship between OIC and China on the limitations of religious and national identity organizations, but international religion. Through this aspect, these are translated into general legal principles based on the values of Islamic law. This research also shows that the OIC negotiates with China by upholding the principles of Islamic law without limiting its capacity as an international organization.

Then (Sharqieh, 2012) this research discusses the potential of the OIC to contribute to conflict mediation in the Islamic world. Through interviews with members of the OIC and government officials from Iraq and the Philippines, as well as research methods through primary and secondary data, the authors analyzed four cases involving the OIC in mediation efforts in the Philippines, Thailand, Iraq, and Somalia. Then this research results in an assessment of the advantages and challenges of the OIC in this mediation effort, as well as recommendations on increasing capacity and inter-organizational partnerships that can increase the potential of the OIC to play a constructive role in conflicts that occur involve the Muslim community.

Finally, (Hasan, 2004) this study describes the role of the OIC in resolving conflicts between its members in a peaceful manner. This research discusses the origin of the OIC in resolving the conflict between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) - Jordan and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) - Bangladesh and Pakistan, then failed in the 1980s-1990s to resolve the Iraq conflict. Although every Qur'an value regarding mediation is easy to understand among Muslims, the OIC has not always been able to put them into practice to bring peace between warring parties. This research also discusses conflicts between Muslim

countries and analyzes the role of the OIC in regulating conflicts between its member countries.

These three studies have explained the role of the OIC in resolving several conflicts that occur in the Islamic world or those concerning the protection of Muslims around the world. However, this research still has not focused on the role of the OIC as an international organization in the liberation of human rights that occurs in Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang, China through understanding the role of international organizations and the freedom of human rights discrimination. Then, this paper will further describe the role of the OIC in exempting discrimination against Uighur Muslims.

Theoretical Framework

International organization is a pattern of cooperation that crosses several countries which are based on a clear and complete organizational structure and are expected/ applied to run and carry out its functions sustainably and institutionally to achieve the organizational goals required by mutual agreement, either between the government and the government or fellow non-government groups (Rudy, 2009). The international organization is an institutional form that includes active participants in the international system, which is a forum for discussion and negotiation. International organizations focus on one or a number of problem areas, the general objectives of international organizations can be classified according to scope, function and centralization (Rittberge, Kruck, Zangl, & Dijkstra, 2019).

International organizations can also be interpreted as Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) which are focused on their impact on international relations among government actors which have common characteristics, namely: *First*, they are permanent organizations that carry out a unified function. *Second*, membership is voluntary for eligible parties. *Third*, there

are main instruments that explain the objectives, structure, and operational methods. *Fourth*, there is a body that is representative of all members. *Fifth*, there is a permanent secretariat to carry out administrative, research, and continuous information functions. In addition to the function of international organizations as oversight of the implementation of regulations, international organizations determine the measures of violations and determine steps to deal with violations of the regulation (Sugito, 2016).

According to Le Roy A. Bannet in his book *International Organization: Principles and Issue*, international organizations were formed with the aim of keeping regulations running accordingly to achieve common goals and as a forum for relations between nations and countries. To realize the interests of each country in the context of international relations, the Organization also has a function to carry out its activities. The functions of international organizations according to Le Roy A. Bannet are: Provide the things needed for cooperation carried out between countries where the cooperation produces great benefits for the entire nation and provide multiple channels of communication between governments so that ideas can come together when problems arise (Perwita, 2005).

From the explanation above, the role of international organizations can solve problems that occur in the international world, through cooperation between international organizations and state governments or community organizations that want to help solve common problems as well as international organizations also play a role in providing accurate information in the form of reports that can be communicated to the government or society so that the resolution of a problem or conflict can be realized through the role of international organizations as a forum for mediation.

Meanwhile, according to W.W Biddle

and L. J. Biddle, the role of an institution or organization in helping other parties solve problems can be divided into 3 roles, namely:

As a motivator, which means that an organization or institution acts to provide encouragement or motivation to the international community to do something in achieving common goals, through this explanation, the role as a motivator is carried out by international organizations in collaboration with governments and other community institutions by motivating the world community to be more concerned with, support, and uphold human rights and against discrimination or human rights violations. In an implementation, international organization strengthen cooperation ties with state governments and organizations related to the problems faced to help realize the freedom of human rights discrimination and protect people in freedom of worship as well as convey opinions that occur to Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang, China. Not only that, but international organizations also have a function to guarantee and enhance cooperation between countries in protecting human rights.

As a communicator, it means that an organization or institution can convey correct and valid information to the international community so that it can be accounted for. The role of the communicator is carried out by international organizations by collecting valid data in the field and then reporting it to the forum. These reports will later serve to provide a new perspective for the international community regarding human rights violations which are urgent matters that must be resolved immediately for better human survival in the future. Not only that, but international organizations can also cooperate with governments and other community organizations and seek communication with the authorities so as not to discriminate against human rights violations.

As a mediator, which means that an organization or institution becomes a mediator or a mediation party in charge of bridging the two parties involved in problems or conflicts in building good relationships and solving problems. The role as a mediator is carried out by international organizations in order to carry out their duties to bridge the between the government and Uighur Muslims in solving the problem of free discrimination against human rights violations. In addition, international organizations must also provide assistance and provide protection for Uighur Muslims in order to be free from discrimination by the Chinese government (Biddle, 1965).

Research Methods

Methods are used as procedures or processes that connect the various techniques and tools used in research and for theory testing and evaluation. The research method used in this study is a qualitative approach with descriptive methods, namely an approach used to explain the social phenomenon being studied. This research is used to understand and explain social phenomena that have or are currently happening through the use of descriptive data methods such as books, scientific journals, and valid articles to better understand events related to the problem or topic being researched (Moleong, 2000).

Mostly the data collection uses secondary data. Secondary data is data obtained from research studies and books. The data used is a source of information about the role of the OIC in tackling human rights discrimination against Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang, China. Therefore, the research was conducted by collecting library data. This technique is based on researched information from literature reference sources such as scientific journals, books, news articles, opinions, or previous research on the role of the OIC in addressing discrimination against Uighur

Muslims.

In analyzing the data and information obtained for this research, qualitative data analysis techniques are needed, according to Lexi J. Moleong who writes that "*Qualitative methodology is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior*" (Moleong, 2000).

Qualitative research aims to form a descriptive explanation of an event using the information that has been obtained. This qualitative research uses inductive thinking in making general conclusions based on certain events or facts. In accordance with the research objectives, using qualitative techniques can analyze, describe and explain the role of the OIC as an international organization in overcoming the problem of human rights discrimination against Uighur Muslims based on information and facts obtained from appropriate secondary data or literature sources with the research discussed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

OIC response against Uighur Muslim discrimination

In 2018 the emergence of acts of discrimination against Muslim Uighurs by the Chinese Government in Xinjiang, due to the program policies implemented by the Chinese Government to Uighur Muslims in the form of Mass Internment and Re-Education Programs Mass Internment and Re-Education Programs where around one million Uighurs were detained without time limit by means of forced sleep deprivation, beatings, hanging on the ceiling and walls so that they are forced to renounce their religion. There is also Anti-Islamic Programming where the Chinese government destroys religious buildings such as mosques, prohibits Uighur Muslims from using Islamic names for their newborn babies, and builds crematoriums to eliminate the tradition of Islamic

funerals in Uighurs (Towadi, 2021).

Several OIC member countries have also responded to support for discrimination against Uighur Muslims, Uighur defense actions carried out by several OIC member countries such as Turkey with the event with protests in front of even China to demand the rights of Uighur Muslims (Laylia, 2018). Then, the OIC member states in Southeast Asia such as Malaysia and Indonesia, wherein 2019 in Indonesia carried out protest movements in the midst of the presidential election to liberate discrimination against Uighur Muslims from the Chinese government and at the same time in Malaysia carried out the same protest with the Malaysian Muslim Youth Movement to further voice efforts to liberate Uighur Muslims (Annuar, Choong, & Jun, 2019). From the OIC member countries that provide support to the Uighur who are dominated by a common Sunni understanding that is in accordance with the majority of Uighur Muslims such as the three OIC member countries (Turkey, Malaysia, and Indonesia) this does not mean that the Shia OIC member states do not provide support, it's just that there is still no visible response to this issue. Of course, from all OIC member countries provide support for Uighurs, only these three countries are the most aggressive in defending Uighur Muslims, so this also encourages the OIC movement to be more responsive to the issue of discrimination against Uighur Muslims by the Chinese government.

This makes the OIC the largest Islamic international organization in the world to negotiate with OIC member countries to discuss the issue of re-education camps and several Chinese government policies that are considered to violate human rights against the Uighur Muslim minority in China. Through the OIC session, *the 46th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers* held in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates in 2019 discussed

the protection of Muslim minorities living in non-OIC countries, including China.

Through this session, OIC members discussed the resolutions that they would implement in responding to discrimination against Muslim minorities in non-OIC countries such as Uighur Muslims in China. At this session, OIC member countries used the *UN General Assembly Declaration* as a reference to determine what decisions they should take regarding the elimination of all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief through the reports of OIC's visit Xinjiang only focused on OIC's constructive efforts in resolving the Uighur issue and cooperation between the OIC and the Chinese government, but this still has not overcome the problem of discrimination against rights and religious freedom that occurs in Uighurs Muslims in Xinjiang, China (OIC, 2019).

Therefore, as an International Organization for Islamic Countries in the world, OIC not only pays attention to Muslim-majority member countries but can also help Muslim minorities in non-member countries. The OIC's role as a communicator in which an international organization provides valid information and data related to the Uighur Muslim issue which will later be reported at the organizational meeting forum so that it can provide a new perspective on the issue of Uighur Muslims as a minority becomes an important thing and becomes a joint responsibility especially Islamic countries to be able to exempt discrimination against Uighur Muslims.

Based on resolution no. 1/32-MM OIC 2005 on safeguarding the rights of Muslim Communities and minorities in non-OIC member states, OIC called the general secretary to give special attention to the issue of the condition of Muslims minority in Xinjiang, China where they are suffering religious harassment, enforced family planning, and eviction from their lands (Rachman, 2019). In 2009 China had invited the OIC to show the basic situation

of the Muslim minority there. It's just that, when the OIC touched on the Uighur ethnicity which made China refer to policies in force in the Xinjiang autonomous region in terms of social development and education, OIC representatives visited Xinjiang directly and met the Uighur Muslim community and condemned the separatist attitude towards Uighur Muslims (Kasim, Towadi, & Bakung, 2020).

In resolving conflicts against Uighur Muslim discrimination, OIC acts as a mediator for both parties in finding good solutions to solve problems related to Uighur Muslims, so that understanding the role of OIC according to Biddle, the role as a mediator is carried out by international organizations in order to carry out their duties to bridge the between the government and Uighur Muslims in solving the problem of free discrimination against human rights violations. Because of the role of the OIC as the title between the Uighur Muslims and the Chinese government, the OIC made efforts by directly meeting the Chinese Government and official visits to Xinjiang to see firsthand the situation of the Muslim Uighur minority.

However, this has not produced sufficient results for the Muslim Uighur minority, OIC issued final resolution no.1/46-MM 2019 on safeguarding the rights of Muslim communities and minorities in non-OIC member states which reads welcoming the results of the visit by the Secretariat General delegation at the invitation of the People's Republic of China; lauds the efforts of the People's Republic of China in paying attention to its Muslim citizens, and looks forward to furthering cooperation between the OIC and the People's Republic of China (OIC, 2019). OIC has played a role as a mediator for both parties, but here the role of OIC is to interact more with the Chinese government. This is because the limited accessibility to meet Uighur Muslims tends

to be difficult so that it has not found good results for the problem of Uighur Muslim discrimination. The role as a mediator can actually help OIC to approach finding, providing and clarifying information or even offering solutions for both parties with problems (Dewantara & Yamin, 2019).

Even though the OIC has directly seen the condition of Uighur Muslims and condemned acts of discrimination, they are still unable to resolve the problem with the Chinese government because the demands made by OIC to the Chinese government are still not too strict to the point, as was done in 2016 when OIC Secretary General Iyad Ameen Madani held a meeting with ambassador Li Huaxin (Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Saudi Arabia). They exchanged views on issues of peace and security, against radical extremism and terrorism. The Secretary-General ensured that the Uighur Muslims must remain safe when carrying out their worship, still have the freedom to exercise their rights, and have an equal position with the majority. This was later responded by Ambassador Li Huaxin who stated that the Chinese government still provides religious freedom for Uighur Muslims and does not discriminate against Uighur Muslim religious activities in Xinjiang. This is actually the opposite of what has happened directly so far, but the actions taken by the OIC to the Chinese government are only limited to negotiations and communication so that they have not provided a strong decision for Uighur Muslims (Kasim, Towadi, & Bakung, 2020). This has made the issue of Uighur Muslim discrimination issue still not floating.

However, this is a debate on Youth-led Free Uighur now about criticizing the OIC failure to condemn China over its abusive treatment of Uighur Muslims where OIC is considered to support the Chinese government in the case of Uighur discrimination and even sent an open letter

to OIC not to be lenient on the issue of Uighur Muslims and must immediately take quick action because OIC has a religious and moral, obligation to condemn atrocities, not support them, and to advocate for the rights of Muslims all over the world, including the millions of Uighurs and Turkic Muslims suffering grave abuses in their own homeland (Farooq, 2020). The OIC countries are urging China to lift restrictions on Muslims in Xinjiang and the Head of the Pakistani Islamic Jemaah Sirajul Haq, which has raised concerns about the Uighur issue he states that "*must, hence, have come as a deep embarrassment to the OIC*" thus supporting OIC's resolutions against Uighur Muslim. The organization continues to pay attention to the extent of its criticism of China considering that China is the main force for a permanent member of the UN Security Council (Chinoy, 2019).

The OIC's efforts to deal with Uighur Muslims problems

Because it continues to experience international pressure such as criticism from UN members regarding discrimination against Uighur Muslims and also the response from OIC member countries to the Chinese government due to acts of discrimination committed against the Uighur Muslim minority, China responded to international pressure by denying the accusations through the publication of three *white papers* related to the issue Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang, including the fight against Terrorism and Extremism and the Protection of Human Rights in Xinjiang. The Chinese government denies discrimination against Uighur Muslims that re-education camps are only vocational training for ethnic Uighurs and responds that UN member states and western media have slandered policies issued by the Chinese government and fueled ethnic strife in Xinjiang through a press conference in Beijing "*crude meddling in China's internal affairs*" by

Shorat Zakir, Chairman of the Xinjiang Government (Ramzy, 2019).

Thus, the Chinese government responds to international accusations of discrimination against Uighur Muslims by strengthening their sovereignty in Xinjiang to maintain the integrity of the Chinese government in the Xinjiang region by seeking to establish diplomatic relations with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Russia by forming a "*Group of five*" to gain foreign powers country regarding every policy they carry out against the Uighurs in Xinjiang. The Chinese government also established the Xinjiang Production Construction Company (XPCC) which is an organization that has administrative and semi-military economic and administrative authority to regulate the administrative and government structures in Xinjiang, then the Chinese government migrated the Han ethnic, which is the majority in China to Xinjiang, to suppress the movement of the Uighur Muslim minority and strengthen the security of Xinjiang's military defense to prevent separatist movements, religious extremism, and terrorism groups that can threaten the security of the Xinjiang region (Purba, 2020).

As a consequence the OIC made various efforts to fight for Uighur Muslims such as in 2016, the OIC secretary-general held an official meeting with the Chinese ambassador to Saudi Arabia from the Secretary-General then asked about the situation of Uighur Muslims at that time related to the level of religious observance permitted by the Chinese government during the month of Ramadan which was later responded by the Chinese government, that their country fully supports religious freedom and does not discriminate against Muslim religious activities in Xinjiang. In 2018, OIC organized the *14th Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHCR)* in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. At the meeting, the OIC projected an understanding of politics

and Islam and acknowledged reports accusing China of forcing Uighur Muslims to follow and adopt cultural values and practices that contradict their beliefs so that OIC enhances bilateral relations with China and through the IPHRC continues to push for the protection of human rights and guarantees a fair legal process (Kasim, Towadi, & Bakung, 2020).

In May 2018, a delegation from the Xinjiang Cultural and Communications Center visited the OIC Secretariat General at the meeting where the delegation was briefed on OIC activities in the fields of politics, culture, dialogue and outreach. The Xinjiang delegation for its part provided briefings on the Chinese Government's policies and programs for the promotion and improvement of various ethnic communities and in particular for Uighurs and other Muslim communities in China. The two sides agreed to expand the area of cooperation with various Chinese institutions and hold subsequent bilateral consultations (OIC, 2019).

From the role of the OIC above, they always report every progress of efforts to liberate Uighur Muslims at every organizational meeting as a form of a report. OIC also has a direct dialogue with the Chinese government regarding the Muslim Uighur minority which must be improved in terms of their culture and religion so that they can coexist with the majority in Xinjiang. The role of a communicator is more precisely gathering information and conveying it in forums or meetings to provide new views on an issue so that a solution can be found. The OIC has done its part to the best of its ability, even though it requires considerable effort to free Uighur Muslim discrimination.

In handling cases of discrimination against Uighur Muslims, according to Biddle, OIC should act as a motivator where international organizations encourage member States to achieve common goals. In this case, OIC through the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission

(IPHRC) meeting has stated that the Chinese government has established camps as educational centers to combat extremism and separatism in Xinjiang but these camps have violated the human rights of ethnic Uighurs who are forced to follow and adopt a culture and practices that are contrary to the identity of the Uighur people. The meeting only resulted in a statement of hope to the Chinese government so that in its efforts to fight terrorism, it can still guarantee the rights and freedom of religion (Damayani, 2020).

Through a meeting by OIC's Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) to discuss issues related to Uighur Muslims, OIC has played a role as a motivator to make the world aware that the issue of Uighur Muslims must be concerned, by requiring support from other parties as well as opening the eyes of the world by issuing a statement to release discrimination against Uighur Muslims. However, this action is still not maximal to criticize the actions of the Chinese government towards Uighur Muslims, because it is considered that they had not given real results for the Uighur Muslim minority.

After the efforts made by the OIC against discrimination among Uighur Muslims so far, it has not had a significant impact on progress towards the complete liberation of Uighur Muslims. This is because, Uighur Muslims who are still in Xinjiang continue to be persecuted and locked up in "re-education" camps, forcing them to leave Islam, causing some Uighur Muslims to flee from Xinjiang province to several Islamic countries such as Pakistan and Turkey. However the Deputy Head of Mission at the Chinese Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan considers Uighur Muslims in Pakistan to be 'terrorists' so they deport Uighur Muslims to return to their hometowns in Xinjiang, China. Likewise, Turkey is repatriating Uighur Muslim refugees to return to their hometowns (Bharadwaj, 2021).

The OIC Obstacles in liberating discrimination against Uighur Muslims

Even though the efforts that have been done by OIC to the best of their ability to Uighur Muslims have not yet achieved maximum results to free discrimination of Uighur Muslims, this makes OIC was also hampered because the Chinese government increased cooperation with other countries such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Russia by forming a "Group of five" related to the issue of Uighur Muslims, then the Chinese government formed the Xinjiang Production Construction Company (XPCC) organization so that all movements from outside Xinjiang is strictly regulated if it wants to carry out inspections or monitoring carried out by the OIC against Muslim Uighurs. With the Chinese government's policy on Han ethnic migration to Xinjiang, making it more difficult for the Muslim Uighur minority to move as well as adding to the difficulty for the OIC to release them, coupled with a tightened military defense policy in Xinjiang, the OIC cannot arbitrarily enter the Xinjiang region without the consent of the Chinese government. Also this is influenced by political factors between the OIC Countries and the Chinese government which has traditional relations in which China is the right veto holder at the UN always supports a position that is in line with OIC matters such as the Palestine-Israel case where China supports OIC for Palestinian independence which is the main agenda of the OIC so this is OIC's objection to opposing China regarding discrimination against Uighur Muslims. The peace process is unlikely to succeed by itself. It must be part of a wider political transformation, including the devolution of political and economic power (Abuza, 2016). It can be seen by the economic interests between China and several OIC member countries that establish economic cooperation with the Chinese government

through One Belt One Road (OBOR) for their country's economic development have made OIC countries very careful in their actions to liberate Uighur Muslims without happening termination of economic cooperation relations (Damayani, 2020) therefore this is also an obstacle for the OIC to take a firm stance because it has previous cooperative relations with the Chinese government so that the efforts made by the OIC seem weak against the Chinese government to free discrimination against Uighur Muslims.

CONCLUSION

From this study, it can be concluded that the role of the OIC as an international organization consisting of Islamic countries in the world, which has the final resolution about safeguarding the rights of Muslim communities and minorities in non-OIC member states which is to provide protection for Muslim minorities such as Muslim Uighurs in Xinjiang, China. The OIC has also done their best in various ways, such as holding meetings with other organizations about human rights, having direct dialogue and discussions with the Chinese government regarding the discrimination of Muslim Uighurs, even the OIC to direct visits to Xinjiang, as well as conducting bilateral relations with the Chinese Government regarding life of Muslim minority in China. However, the efforts that the OIC has made are still not paying off for the Muslim Uighur minority.

This research has explained how the OIC's efforts as international organization in overcoming the issue of exempting discrimination against Uighur Muslims. From the three roles of the OIC as an international organization that is effective to carry out is the role of mediator, where OIC representatives make direct visits to Xinjiang and special meetings with the Chinese government in the context of mediating solutions to the liberation of the rights of the Uighur Muslim minority who experience discrimination in Xinjiang,

China. This is also a more appropriate way, because it involves both parties in avoiding a continuous conflict.

However, the OIC still faces obstacles in liberating Uighur Muslims due to political factors where China as a veto-holding country at the United Nations always supports the OIC's main agenda and several OIC member countries also have economic cooperation relations with China through OBOR so that the OIC is still problematic in liberating Uighur Muslims on the side not to damage economic and political relations with the Chinese government. This makes the OIC's efforts less resolute so that it has not been maximized to free discrimination against Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang, China.

In this study, the authors still have difficulties related to the limitations of data collection regarding the role of OIC in exempting discrimination against Uighur Muslims, this is because the information or data released still has less accessibility and public transparency so that the authors

only analyze based on existing or previous research data. Then, most of the existing data and information criticize the role of the OIC which is considered not optimal in dealing with the issue of Uighur Muslims, therefore the authors only take data and information related to what efforts OIC has made. It is hoped that in the future data and information related to OIC can be more transparent so that it is easily accessible and the role of OIC must try harder and more courageously to free Uighur Muslims.

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