

COLUMBIA GLOBAL REPORTS

Dear Reader,

The world is waking up to the shocking realization that the People’s Republic of China maintains a vast network of camps devoted to the involuntary reeducation of more than a million people. Most of them are Muslims who belong to ethnic minority groups living along China’s northwest border. Darren Byler, a brilliant young anthropologist, has done as much original research about the camps as anyone, and *In the Camps*, his first book, stands as the most complete and detailed account so far of this brutal system.

Byler has spent years interviewing former detainees and their families, mostly Uyghurs and Kazakhs. With vivid writing and astute analysis, Byler gives us both a palpable sense of what daily life in the camps is like, and also of the larger structures in which the camps are embedded. He insists that technology supplied by American companies is an essential aspect of the camp system. Extensive technological surveillance precedes detention itself; often what gets someone sent away is a “pre-crime,” like frequent attendance at religious services in mosques.

What’s most chilling about Byler’s account is the psychological aspect of the system. What the Chinese government primarily aims to take away from people is their privacy and their freedom of thought—the most intimate of human rights. *In the Camps* is not only a powerful indictment of the camps themselves, but also a reminder of the preciousness of liberty and autonomy, and of their fragility in the Twenty-First-Century world.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicholas Lemann". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Nicholas Lemann