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TOP STORY

Uyghur Asylum Seekers in the Netherlands Pressured to Return to China

Nearly a dozen Uyghurs in the Netherlands have been refused political asylum three or more times and are facing intense pressure from Dutch authorities to return to China, where they are likely to face persecution, according to a Uyghur at a refugee camp. They are among more than 50 Uyghurs from East Turkestan who had applied for asylum in the Netherlands.

“The 50 or so Uyghurs have all had their applications for asylum rejected at least once. About 12 of them have been rejected three times or more ... They have not been issued identification documents or given social benefits. It makes me sick to see this,” said Abdushukur Sherip, a 30-year-old from Xinjiang’s Gulja city who has been living for three years in a refugee camp in Amersfoortsestraatweg, southeast of Amsterdam.

Sherip, whose application for asylum has been rejected twice, said that life has been hard in the camp, but that many of his fellow Uyghurs have been there for a longer period—some for five or six years. He felt the Dutch authorities were unaware of the gravity of the crisis faced by many Uyghurs, a Turkic-speaking Muslim people native to Xinjiang who resent Chinese rule and controls on their religion, culture and language. In addition, recent economic development has unfairly benefited China’s majority Han who had migrated to the region over the past decades.

“I think this government and the lawyers don’t understand what the situation is like in East Turkestan. If I say OK to the Chinese government [policies], I can live very well there. But because there is no freedom there, I am here,” said Sherip, whose second application for asylum was rejected on Sept. 22.

“The court doesn’t understand what the situation is like there and I want the court and the West to understand,” he said.

Officials, he said, did not believe his claim that he had traveled to the country to escape religious persecution, adding that they doubted the likelihood he could face torture in jail on his return to China. “The court says my story is confusing. I don’t understand why they have rejected my case. I didn’t come here to make money—I am seeking religious freedom and human rights,” Sherip told RFA in an interview last week.

The Dutch Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations did not immediately respond to RFA’s queries on the Uyghur asylum claims.

[...] The full article is available here.

FEATURED ARTICLES

German Court Convicts Man of Spying for China

A German court convicted a 45-year-old Uyghur man of espionage on behalf of China on 12 October 2011, finding that he monitored exiled Uyghurs - but freed him with a one-year suspended prison term.

German counter-intelligence agencies said he was part of a surveillance operation run out of the Chinese consulate-general in Munich, where 700 exiles make up the largest community in western Europe of the mainly Muslim ethnic group from western China.

He was the second person to be convicted since police moved against Uyghurs spying against their own people. The name of the defendant was withheld under German media privacy guidelines.

In the Munich state superior court, he admitted conducting espionage from 2005 to 2009. Prosecutors said he gave his Chinese paymasters advance details of anti-China demonstrations and personal details about leaders of the World Uyghur Congress (WUC).

See also:

Prozess um Bespitzelung der Uiguren in Deutschland
DPA, 12 September 2011
CECC Analysis: Authorities in East Turkestan Implement Ramadan Curbs Amid Renewed Pledges for Tight Controls Over Religion

Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC), 11 October 2011

Authorities in East Turkestan/XUAR have continued to exert tight controls over the Muslim holiday of Ramadan, which occurred this year in August. During the month-long period of daily fasting, local government authorities prohibited students, teachers, and government workers from observing the fast, ordered restaurants to stay open, and increased oversight of mosques and religious personnel. The Ramadan curbs follow similar controls in place in previous years, as documented by the Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC).

The curbs also came amid a renewed pledge by XUAR authorities to “strike hard” against “illegal religious activities.” At an August 5 meeting, XUAR Communist Party Secretary Zhang Chunxian called for “resolutely curbing illegal religious activities,” as well as attacking “using religion to instigate and implement violent terrorist activities.” [...] The XUAR Public Security Department launched a two-month “strike hard” anti-terrorism campaign later in the month that includes “illegal religious activities” and “religious extremism” as targets. [...] The heightened controls follow incidents in Kashgar and Hoten municipalities in July that authorities and official media described as terrorist attacks. [...] As authorities continue to target “illegal religious activities” and “extremism,” recent curbs instituted during Ramadan include:

Students, Teachers Forbidden from Fasting: As XUAR authorities continue to enforce harsh controls over children’s freedom of religion, including curbs unseen elsewhere in China, local authorities have described a range of steps to prevent children from observing Ramadan and from participating in other religious activities. “Indulging” or “letting students alone” to fast during Ramadan is among 23 acts defined as “illegal religious activities” in the XUAR. Authorities also have applied curbs to teachers. [...] Government Workers Barred From Observing Holiday: Authorities have continued to forbid government employees from observing Ramadan, in some cases also imposing curbs on their family members. [...] Orders for Restaurants To Stay Open: Some local governments have ordered or pressured restaurants to continue operations during Ramadan, a period when some eating establishments traditionally close during the day. In Jiashi (Peyziwat) county, Kashgar, authorities reported they would inspect restaurants to ensure the “political stability of the county” during Ramadan and not permit “any restaurant to stop operations for any reason,” according to a July 28 report on the Jiashi County Government Web site. [...] Increased Controls Over Mosques and Religious Personnel: Local authorities have described taking a range of measures to increase supervision of mosques and religious personnel during Ramadan. [...] Authorities also told religious personnel they were responsible for “dissuading” (quanzu) any students, teachers, or Party members found to be fasting and told religious leaders they would be “severely dealt with” if found “inciting” a student to fast. Authorities in Tatirang township, Qimo, described promoting a range of measures to strengthen control over religious personnel and venues, according to an August 5 report on the Qimo County Government Web site. Measures included “seriously implementing” a system of fixed contact with religious venues and a system of
"chatting and making friends" with religious personnel; strengthening a system of legal responsibility for religious venues; enhancing training of religious personnel; and taking "effective measures" to stop "illegal activities" such as "underground scripture studies," taking on private religious students, and organizing religious activities that go beyond the locality. [...] 

The full article is available [here](http://www.uyghurcongress.org).

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**MEDIA WORK**

**Interview: Rebiya Kadeer on Asylum Seekers in Malaysia**

On **12 October**, WUC-President Rebiya Kadeer gave an interview to ABC Australia on the recently discussed refugee swap between Australia and Malaysia, highlighting that Malaysia is not a save country for refugees as seen recently, when 11 Uyghurs were deported to China on 18 August 2011.

**WUC on Facebook and Twitter**

The WUC would like to invite all its supporters to "like" WUC’s Facebook page [www.facebook.com/uyghurcongress](http://www.facebook.com/uyghurcongress) as well as to follow us on Twitter (@UyghurCongress) to stay updated on the latest developments in East Turkestan and on Uyghur human rights.

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**PAST EVENTS**

**Uyghur Demonstrations around the World on 1 October**

While the Chinese are celebrating the **1 October** (Chinese National Day) as a national holiday to commemorate the foundation of the PRC, for the Uyghurs it is a day of mourning. Uyghur organizations in exile held worldwide demonstrations to raise awareness on the situation of the Uyghurs and to protest the occupation of East Turkestan 62 years ago. Demonstrations and protest actions took place in Germany, the US, Sweden, Canada (Toronto and Vancouver), and Norway.

See also:

- [Masked Protesters Mark 62nd Anniversary of the PRC](http://www.uyghurcongress.org)
- [Tibet Custom, 2 October 2011](http://www.uyghurcongress.org)
- [Chinese Mark 'National Tragedy Day' Worldwide](http://www.uyghurcongress.org)
- [The Epoch Times, 4 October 2011](http://www.uyghurcongress.org)
- [WUC Representative Met Swedish Integration in Stockholm](http://www.uyghurcongress.org)

Mehmet Tohti, Special Representative of World Uyghur Congress, met Erik Ullenhag, Swedish Minister of Integration in Stockholm on **4 October** for detailed discussion of the situation of Uyghurs in East Turkestan, Chinese policies to the region and challenges of Uyghur refuges in Sweden.

During the meeting detailed report of Uyghur refugees and a list of Uyghurs refuges who are facing serious problems in their asylum application in Sweden have been submitted to the attention of Swedish government. Also very urgent intervention has been requested for some Uyghur Asylum seekers who have already received deportation order from Swedish Authorities.

Dilshat Rashit, WUC's spokesperson, Mahinur Khessanova, Chairwoman of Swedish Uyghur Committee, Ehmet Tursun, Chair of Uyghur Educational Association in Sweden have attended the meeting.

**Rebiya Kadeer at AI Human Rights Conference Australia**

From **6 to 8 October**, Amnesty International Australia held its biggest ever Human Rights Conference in Brisbane, as the organisation marks 50 years of defending freedom and justice. Under the theme, ‘Change the World’, Amnesty International assembled an impressive array of top speakers and human rights defenders to lead a series of lectures and workshops. Rebiya Kadeer, WUC President, was invited to give a speech on her struggle for Uyghur human rights. (photo: AI/Harrison Saragossi)

See also:

- [Uyghur leader back in Australia](http://www.uyghurcongress.org)
- [ABC News, 7 October 2011](http://www.uyghurcongress.org)

**Uyghur PEN at Book Fair in Frankfurt**

The Uyghur PEN, represented by Keiser Özhun, ([www.uyghurpen.com](http://www.uyghurpen.com)) together with the Uyghur
publication houses “Taklamakan” (Turkey) and “Mir” (Kazakhstan) participated with an own stand in the international book fair in Frankfurt which took place from 10 to 14 October 2011. WUC Secretary General Dolkun Isa and Director of RFA’s Uyghur Service Dolkun Kamberi attended the book fair. The President of the International PEN, John Ralston Saul, visited the Uyghur stand.

The International PEN Uyghur Center (Uyghur PEN) is one of 145 International PEN centers across the globe dedicated to promoting freedom of expression, though and information for all. It stands in solidarity with writers everywhere who have been forced into silence by censorship. It also campaigns for the release of imprisoned writers, for free media, for the right to one's mother tongue, and for other rights related to freedom of expression. Uyghur PEN’s focus of expertise is on western China and Central Asia.

**Lecture on Kashgar at East-Asian Museum in Stockholm**

On 11 October, a lecture entitled “Meetings in Kashgar” took place at the Östasiatiska museet in Stockholm, Sweden. The event was co-organized by the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul. In this lecture, the Asian curator at the Ethnographic Museum, Hakan Wahlquist, talked about how life was during the late 1800s and early 1900s in the city of Kashgar.

**Concerts of the Caravan "A breakfast in Kashgar prolongs life", Germany**

On 14 October, a cultural event on Uyghur history and traditions, including Uyghur dance and Uyghur Food, took place in Münster, Germany. The evening was a musical journey to the Uighur people with songs, dances, stories and pictures.

Organizers: TheaTerra – KünstlerInnen-Netzwerk, in cooperation with the Society for Threatened People (www.gfbv.de).

For more information visit: www.konzert-der-karawane.de

**Canadian Uyghurs Meet Minister of Immigration**

On 17 October, representatives of the Uyghur community in Vancouver met with the Canadian Minister of Immigration Jason Kenney to discuss the general situation of Uyghur asylum seekers and refugees worldwide, as well as recent extraditions of Uyghurs from China’s neighbouring countries. In addition, they raised the case of Huseyin Celil, an Uyghur of Chinese and Canadian citizenship. He was arrested in Uzbekistan in 2006, extradited to China against the objections of the Canadian government, and sentenced to life in prison on fabricated charges of terrorism.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**4th International March for Freedom of Oppressed Peoples and Minorities**

Società Libera has been promoting for three years the International March for Freedom in Rome. This is a silent demonstration that aims to rally public opinion in defense of the freedom of Burmese, Iranian, Tibetan and Uyghur Peoples, and to give a wider visibility to the commitment of whoever is fighting for freedom all over the world. This year, the freedom march will take place in Berlin, Paris and Rome on 22 October at 3p.m. Members of the WUC and of the Uyghur community in Munich, Germany, will travel to Berlin to attend the march.

For more information see here. Link to the youtube channel.

### HIGHLIGHTED MEDIA ARTICLES AND REPORTS ON UYGHUR RELATED ISSUES

**Attacks on Uyghur Students in Karamay**

According to a recent article published by Radio Free Asia’s Uyghur service, on Friday, 14 October 2011, Han Chinese High school students attacked Uyghurs from the same school in the city of Karamay, located in the north of East Turkestan. The incident left at least ten Uyghurs hospitalized, three of them were severely injured.

Following the violence on Friday, families and friends of the injured as well as hundreds of students demonstrated on Monday, 17 October, against the lack of action by Chinese authorities regarding the incident, as well as against the overall situation in East Turkestan, where Uyghurs suffer cultural, social, economical and political discrimination. The protestors also called for an end of the co-educational school system where Uyghurs and Han Chinese students study together.

**New CECC: Publication of 2011 Annual Report on China**
On 10 October, the Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC, www.cecc.gov) issued its 2011 Annual Report on human rights conditions and the development of the rule of law in China. Among the major trends that observed during the 2011 reporting year (covering the period from fall 2010 to fall 2011) and in regard to the Uyghurs, the Commission highlights the following issues:

**Ethnic Minority Language and Culture:** In Tibetan autonomous areas of China, East Turkestan/XUAR, the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, and other minority areas, the government continued to promote policies threatening the viability of the language and culture of Tibetans, Uyghurs, Mongols, and other groups, in contravention of China’s Constitution and law providing autonomy to ethnic minorities. These policies included the imposition of Mandarin Chinese language in schools at the expense of other languages, the compulsory resettlement of large numbers of nomads, tight curbs over religious practice, and economic development projects that threatened livelihoods and sacred sites.

**Religious Regulation:** The Chinese government continued to formally recognize only five religions and to require groups belonging to these religions to register with the government and submit to ongoing state control.

**Regulations in Ethnic Minority Regions – Uyghurs:** Following demonstrations and riots in the Xinjiang region in 2009, authorities there maintained repressive security policies that targeted peaceful dissent, human rights advocacy, and expressions of cultural and religious identity, especially among Uyghurs. Generally, the CECC underlines that human rights conditions in East Turkestan remained poor during the Commission’s 2011 reporting year.

Please click here to download the report in full.

See also:
- 'Increased Disregard of Law'
  RFA, 12 October 2011

**MORE MEDIA ARTICLES**

**Uyghurs / East Turkestan**

- **Dying for a Living**
  Technorati, 3 October 2011

- **China plans new economic zones near western border**
  The Hindu, 11 October 2011

- **New Chinese Energy and Resource Tax to Help Appease Tibet and Xinjiang**
  NTD TV, 12 October 2011

- **'Fake' Group Welcomes Chinese Minister**
  Radio Free Asia, 17 Oct 2011

**Tibet**

- **Dalai Lama cancels South Africa Tutu trip over visa**
  BBC, 4 October 2011

- **Exile administration condemns China’s response to self-immolations, Calls for international intervention**
  Phayul, 10 October 2011

- **'China is trying to deflect global attention from Tibetan issue’**
  The Times of India, 13 October 2011

**China**

- **China: Release Nobel Laureate and Others Wrongly Jailed, Disappeared: Official Vindictiveness Against Liu Xiaobo, his Family, and Supporters**
  HRW, 7 October 2011

- **Forget about morality, my China**
  News 24, 10 October 2011
ABOUT THE UYGHURS

The Uyghur People

The Uyghur people are indigenous to East Turkestan [also known as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in northwest China]. For many years, the Chinese government has waged an intense and often brutal campaign to repress all forms of Uyghur dissent, crack down on Uyghurs’ peaceful religious activities and independent expressions of ethnicity, dilute Uyghurs’ culture and identity as a distinct people, and threaten the survival of the Uyghur language.

The authorities have routinely equated Uyghurs’ peaceful political, religious, and cultural activities with the “three evils” – terrorism, separatism and religious extremism – and have couched their persecution of the Uyghurs as efforts to quash these “three evils.” The authorities have also economically marginalized the Uyghurs in East Turkestan through intense and blatant racial discrimination in employment.

The Uyghurs are a Turkic people and have long practiced a moderate, traditional form of Sunni Islam, strongly imbued with the folklore and traditions of a rural, oasis-dwelling population.

East Turkestan

East Turkestan lies in the very heart of Asia. Situated along the fabled ancient Silk Road, it has been a prominent centre of commerce for more than 2000 years. The current territorial size of East Turkestan is 1.82 million square kilometers. The neighboring Chinese province annexed part of the territory as a result of the Chinese communist invasion of 1949.

East Turkestan borders with China and Mongolia to the east, Russia to the north, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India to the west, and Tibet to the south.

According to latest Chinese census in 2010, the current population of East Turkestan is 21.81 million including 8.75 million ethnic Han Chinese (40.1%) illegal settled in East Turkestan after 1949 (the ethnic Han Chinese numbered 200,000 in 1949). The Uyghurs make up around 10.2 million Uyghurs (according to the 2000 census; the numbers for 2010 have not been published yet) and constitute still the majority of East Turkestan. However, the population shifts more and more in favor of the Han Chinese and make the Uyghurs strangers in their own land. However, Uyghur sources put the real population of Uyghurs around 20 million.

Events of 5 July 2009

The human rights situation of the Uyghur population in East Turkestan has been dire for decades and has even worsened since the July 2009 protest and ethnic unrest in Urumqi, the capital of East Turkestan.

The July 2009 protest began with a peaceful demonstration by Uyghurs in Urumqi that was brutally and lethally suppressed by Chinese security forces. The Uyghurs were protesting against a lack of government action in regard to a deadly attack on Uyghur factory workers in Shaoguan, Guangdong Province in the south of China. The violent and illegal reaction of the Chinese security forces to the peaceful protest led then to ethnic violence and riots between Uyghurs and Han Chinese, during which hundreds of Uyghur and Han Chinese civilians were killed.

According to data published by the Chinese Xinhua news agency, 197 people were killed, but the World Uyghur Congress estimates – based on eyewitness reports - that more than 1000 people died in the riots. However, until today, the exact death toll on both sides is not clear since so far no independent investigation of these events has been undertaken.

ABOUT THE WORLD UYGHUR CONGRESS

The World Uyghur Congress (WUC) is an international umbrella organization that represents the collective interest of the Uyghur people both in East Turkestan and abroad and promotes Uyghur human rights and a peaceful and non-violent solution based on rule of law for the conflict in East Turkestan. For more information, please visit our website.

WUC’s monthly newsletter provides the latest information on Uyghur related issues and informs about the work and activities of the WUC and its affiliate members. Older editions of the newsletter can be viewed from the web.
To subscribe for WUC´s e-mail service, please fill in this form. If you wish to stop receiving e-mails from the World Uyghur Congress, please send an e-mail with "unsubscribe" in the subject to contact@uyghurcongress.org

Support the World Uyghur Congress!

The WUC is organised as a non-profit organisation and relies on membership fees, grants and donations, which help the organisation to sustain its work and activities. Your donation will support our efforts to promote the preservation and flourishing of a rich, humanistic and diverse Uyghur culture, and to support the right of the Uyghur people to use peaceful, democratic means to determine their own political future.

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