



Nonviolent Radical Party Transnational and Transparty

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Oral Statement - General Debate on Item 4 (“Human Rights situations that require the Council’s attention”) at the 19th Session of the UN Human Rights Council

Controls over religion in the Muslim-majority region of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) remain among the harshest in China, and in the past year, curbs over religious practice have dramatically increased. The Nonviolent Radical Party (NRP) is deeply worried about these developments and would like to highlight some of the restrictions imposed by the Chinese authorities:

Measures to prevent women from using veiling and men from wearing large beards continue under practices classified as a fight against “backwardness, extremism, and illegal religious activities.” Also the control over female Uyghur religious specialists, known as *būwi*, has further increased. Religious publications are regularly targeted in censorship campaigns, and recently, more than 10,000 articles of religious media, including the Koran, were burned in Aksu Prefecture as part of a campaign against “illegal propaganda materials.”

Threats, detentions and even prison terms in connection to peaceful religious activities are widespread. One of the many examples is Imam Abdukiram Abduveli, imprisoned since 1990 for “counterrevolutionary activities.” His initially 12-years prison term has been extended already three times under unknown charges.

However, the increasing oppression of religious freedom in Xinjiang is not new. The Chinese authorities found in the 9/11 attacks the perfect excuse to crackdown on all forms of peaceful Uyghur dissent, creating a dangerous and unfounded link between the Muslim faith and the so-called “three forces” of terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism. To prevent “social instability” in Xinjiang, the Chinese government regularly launches “Strike Hard Campaigns” against the Uyghur population. However, these campaigns mainly target peaceful expressions of Uyghur identity in Xinjiang and tend to over-state the seriousness of a perceived crime. They consistently result in accelerated judicial proceedings, arbitrary detentions, and enforced disappearances. Many hundreds and possibly thousands of Uyghurs have been charged or sentenced under these campaigns.

These measures highlight the aggressive nature of official tactics being employed against Uyghurs’ faith, leaving the Uyghur population without space for their religious practices. In addition, these discriminatory policies further increase social tension in Xinjiang.

To conclude, the NRP calls on the Human Rights Council and particularly on the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism, to investigate these severe violations of fundamental freedoms, notably the freedom of religion, committed by the Chinese authorities against the Uyghur people.

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