



50 YEARS AFTER TEST 596: CHINA'S NUCLEAR PROGRAMME IN EAST TURKESTAN AND ITS IMPACT TODAY

OPENING REMARKS

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Dear Members of the Parliament, Guests and Uyghur Representatives,

First of all I would like to say that I, on behalf of the WUC and its president Ms. Rebiya Kader, thank you so much for co-organizing this conference on Lop Nor by László Tőkés MEP, Kristiina Ojuland MEP and Vytautas Landsbergis MEP. I also thank the UNPO, my friend Marino Busdachin and all his staff, especially Andrew Swan, Louise Fahey, and my colleague Jana Brandt. I would also like to thank the Belgium Uyghur Association and its president Abdullam Imerov.

It is my honour to be here with you today to address the important, but often neglected, topic of nuclear testing in East Turkestan.

This is the third international event I am attending regarding the nuclear tests in Lop Nor. The first one was held 27 years ago. I was a young student at Xinjiang University. In December 1985, a big student demonstration was held in East Turkestan, and in June 1988 a second student demonstration took place. I was one of the organising leaders of this event and was later dismissed from the university for having organised these demonstrations. Since that time, the Chinese authorities consider me a “terrorist.” Students marched against China’s discriminatory policies in East Turkestan, and demanded, amongst other things, an end of the nuclear tests in Lop Nor.

The second event I attended took place in Almaty, Kazakhstan. In July 1995, a couple of hundred activists from around the world gathered in Almaty to participate in a three-day demonstration march from Almaty to Korgas, located close to the border with East Turkestan, to call on the Chinese government to close Lop Nor.

This conference today will be the third event I have attended on Lop Nor.

Why am I talking about this topic? 27 years ago we could hold a demonstration, and nobody would be killed by the Chinese police- “just” punished to house arrest and getting kicked out of university. 16 years ago we could hold an international gathering in Almaty, with no one getting arrested. But unfortunately, today the situation of the Uyghur is getting worse; not only for those in East Turkestan, but also for those in exile. Neighbouring countries have deported a lot of Uyghur refugees to China in recent years.

For many years, the Chinese authorities have been waging an intense and often brutal campaign against any form of peaceful Uyghur dissent. Human rights violations against my people- the Uyghur people- have increased even more after the bloody crackdown in July 2009 in Urumqi, East Turkestan’s regional capital. Religious, political, economical, social and cultural discrimination, together with aggressive state-sponsored resettlement policies, have converted the Uyghurs into strangers in their own land.

The world started to pay attention to the Uyghur issue after the massacre on 5 July when a couple of hundred, and probably thousands of people were killed.

Millions of civilians died from the consequences of the nuclear testing in Lop Nor. However, the effects of the 46 nuclear tests have been silenced; civilian victims literally do not exist as far as the Chinese authorities are concerned. So far, Lop Nor is not on the list of concerns for environmental groups or international organizations, and it is definitely not a matter of concern for the Chinese authorities. Therefore, it is more than urgent to finally address the devastating impact of radioactive exposure that may have affected millions of Uyghur people, and to raise awareness on this topic within the international community. Little is known about the nuclear tests in China, and as a first step, extensive independent research must be conducted in Lop Nor and the surrounding areas to determine its impact. The second step must be the elaboration of a compensation model for the victims, together with lifting the information blackout imposed on the topic by the Chinese authorities.

We addressed the situation in Kashgar one year ago here in the European Parliament, in a very successful conference that then led to an urgency resolution on the situation and cultural heritage of Kashgar. While we deeply appreciate this initiative, we are saddened by the fact that the international community continues to turn a blind eye to the demolition of Kashgar. If international interest ever arises on this issue, it will most likely be too late: the Old City of Kashgar will have disappeared; the few remaining parts will have been “disneyficated” to attract tourists and foreigners with an artificial, and therefore false, image of Uyghur culture.

Today, the Uyghurs live in a constant climate of fear, where a false word against the ruling authorities can put people into prison. It is therefore natural that nuclear victims within East Turkestan have not yet joined forces to demonstrate against the sad heritage of devastating health and environmental effects they have to deal with.

And it is for this important reason – and I repeat it once again – that we speak today on their behalf, on behalf of the victims, and that we are joining forces to give a voice to those silenced by a repressive government. In the name of the Uyghur people, I thank you for making this conference possible today.