

URGENT ACTION

UYGHUR ACADEMIC FACES EXECUTION IN CHINA

Fears are mounting that the Chinese authorities will imminently carry out the execution of Tashpolat Tiyip, a prominent Uyghur academic who was convicted in a secret and grossly unfair trial. Subjected to an enforced disappearance in 2017, he has been arbitrarily detained since then. No information has been made available about charges and proceedings against him and his current whereabouts remain unknown.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping
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Dear President,

*I am writing to ask for your urgent intervention to halt the execution of **Tashpolat Tiyip** which could be carried out as soon as September.*

Tashpolat Tiyip was the President of Xinjiang University when he was forcibly disappeared in 2017, while travelling to Germany with a group of students for a conference. He has been detained since then and his whereabouts remain unknown. He was convicted of "separatism" in secret and grossly unfair proceedings.

Sentenced to a "suspended death sentence", which includes the possibility of commutation after two years' imprisonment when no other crimes are committed, he now faces imminent execution.

I call on you to:

- ***Immediately halt plans to carry out the execution of Tashpolat Tiyip;***
- ***Release Tashpolat Tiyip unconditionally, unless there is sufficient credible and admissible evidence that he committed an internationally recognized offence and is granted a fair trial in line with international standards.***

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Uyghurs are a mainly Muslim ethnic minority who are concentrated primarily in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Xinjiang) in China. Since the 1980s, the Uyghurs have been the target of systematic and extensive human rights violations. This includes arbitrary detention and imprisonment, incommunicado detention, and restrictions on religious freedom as well as cultural and social rights. Local authorities maintain tight control over religious practice, including prohibiting all government employees and children under the age of 18 from worshipping at mosques. Chinese government policies limit the use of the Uyghur language, impose severe restrictions on freedom of religion and encourage sustained influx of Han migrants into the region.

In May 2014, a one-year “strike hard” campaign was launched in Xinjiang, and officials prioritized speedy arrests, quick trials and mass sentencing of Uyghurs. The government called for greater “co-operation” between prosecuting authorities and courts, raising additional concerns that accused individuals would not receive fair trials. The “strike hard” campaign has been extended in the subsequent years, and the authorities have massively increased their expenditure on police. Under such circumstances, many Uyghurs make the decision to flee the country. The Chinese authorities have responded by harassing the relatives of those who have left in order to pressure them to return and increasing attempts to curtail the political and human rights activities of Uyghur activists in other countries. This has led to growing fears among many Uyghurs abroad, including asylum seekers and refugees, of being forcibly returned to China. In recent years, dozens of Uyghur asylum seekers have been forcibly returned from South East Asian or Central Asian countries, to China.

Media reports illustrated the extent of the new draconian security measures implemented since Chen Quanguo came into power as Xinjiang’s Party Secretary in 2016, including over 90,000 new security-related positions being advertised within a one-year period. In October 2016, there were numerous reports that authorities in the region had confiscated Uyghur passports in an attempt to further curtail their freedom of movement. In March 2017, the Xinjiang government enacted the “De-extremification Regulation” that identifies and prohibits a wide range of behaviours labelled “extremist”, such as “spreading extremist thought”, denigrating or refusing to watch public radio and TV programmes, wearing burkas, having an “abnormal” beard, resisting national policies, and publishing, downloading, storing, or reading articles, publications, or audio-visual materials containing “extremist content”. The regulation also set up a “responsibility system” for government cadres for “anti-extremism” work and established annual reviews of their performance. According to Radio Free Asia (RFA), Chinese authorities compelled Uyghur students enrolled in universities abroad to return to China since May 2017. In early July 2017, about 200 Uyghurs were detained in Egypt by order of the Chinese authorities, with 16 who have been forcibly returned have not been heard from since.

The Chinese authorities had denied the existence of “transformation through-education” facilities until October 2018, when acknowledging the camps they described them as voluntary, free “vocational training” centres. They claim that the objective of this vocational training is to provide the people with technical and vocational education to enable them to find jobs and become “useful” citizens. China’s explanation, however, contradicts the reports of beatings, food deprivation and solitary confinement we have collected from former detainees.

Amnesty International has also remained concerned about the secretive use of the death penalty in Xinjiang, in the context of the increased security measures in the “strike hard” campaigns. Such campaigns have typically been associated with the increased use of the death penalty, and scholars have criticized the proceedings used as part of these crackdowns for their lack of fair trial safeguards and the likelihood of “wrongful executions”.

An in-depth investigation published by Amnesty International in April 2017, China’s Deadly Secrets, shows that despite claims by China that it is making progress towards transparency in the criminal justice system, Chinese authorities enforce an elaborate secrecy system to obfuscate the extent of executions. This investigation found hundreds of executions in public media reports are missing from a national online court database, “China Judgements Online”, even though such case should be uploaded according to Chinese regulations. **This was also particularly relevant to death penalty cases relating to the Xinjiang region.** Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases and under any circumstances, as a violation of the right to life and the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. The organization has been campaigning for global abolition of the death penalty for over 40 years.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Chinese, English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 21 October 2019

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Tashpolat Tiyip (he/his)