

# ELITICIDE

## AS CHINA JAILS UYGHUR INTELLECTUALS TO ERASE CULTURE



EAST TURKISTAN PRESS AND MEDIA ASSOCIATION  
شەرقىي تۈركىستان ئاخبارات ۋە مەدەنىيەت جەمئىيىتى



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**East Turkistan, which has been under Chinese Communist rule since 1949, has faced systematic genocide, the erasure of Islamic and Uyghur identities, arbitrary detentions, and mass killings.**

Some people refer to East Turkistan as the “second Palestine” due to the similarities in arbitrary policies, injustice, and inhumane persecution faced by its inhabitants. In fact, the situation in East Turkistan is often described as even more severe than that in Palestine.

The people of East Turkistan are suffering from a severe deprivation of their basic human rights. The Chinese Communist authorities prohibit the practice of all religious activities, including prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, reading the Quran, religious education, wearing Islamic clothes, Islamic marriage ceremonies, Islamic names, growing beards, and other

Islamic practices. They also suppress Islamic culture and civilization, as well as the Uyghur culture, and forbid the use of the native Uyghur language.

China has demolished thousands of mosques in East Turkistan, either destroying them completely or repurposing them for uses such as entertainment venues, nightclubs, animal pens, government buildings, recreational centers, and water parks. Some have even been turned into tourist attractions with admission fees for foreigners, all of which demonstrate a disregard for the sanctity of mosques, Islam, and Muslims.

Since the repressive occupation, the East Turkistan people have held many peaceful demonstrations protesting injustice and oppression, but the Chinese Communist army has violently and brutally suppressed those protests and demonstrations, resulting in the arrest and murder of hundreds of thousands of innocent Turkistanis. The Chinese authorities have also recently banned the East Turkistan people from freely using iron and sharp machines such as knives and scissors and even engraved the numbers and identities of Turkistanis in sharp machines and tied them with iron chains for fear of coups and resistance.

In addition, the Chinese authorities banned the East Turkistan people from traveling outside East Turkistan and also from communicating with their relatives

and friends residing outside East Turkistan, considering it a great crime leading to forced detention for many years and torture to death.

Currently, millions of East Turkistan people are detained in Chinese prisons and detention centers, including children, women and the elderly. They are subjected to the worst methods of psychological and physical torture, rape, brainwashing, forced labor, organ and hair trafficking, and other inhumane policies.

The East Turkistan issue is an Islamic and humanitarian issue, just as the Palestine issue .

We ask Allah Almighty to free all Muslims from oppression and grant them security and safety.



**EAST  
TURKISTAN**

**PALESTINE**





## THE EVENT "I AM TELLING ABOUT THE GENOCIDE OF EAST TURKISTAN" HAS ENDED

**On the 74th anniversary of the Chinese Occupation, an art exhibition and cultural preentation event with the theme “We are narrating the East Turkistan genocide!” took place in Istanbul from September29 to October 8, 2023.**

Organized with the support of various organizations, including the Turkey-based International East Turkistan NGOs Union, the National Turkish Students’ Union (MTTB), the IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation, the Erbakan Foundation, and GENÇ İDSB, the event was held at the National Turkish Students’ Union Istanbul General Headquarters. The event featured an art exhibition depicting the systematic genocide crimes committed by China against Uyghur Muslims, panels and cultural activities, Uyghur clothing and cuisine, as well as memorial rooms vividly

depicting the oppression in the region. This event aimed to make participants understand what the oppressed people in East Turkistan have endured in the camps of persecution.

The exhibition and promotional activities concluded with a closing program held on October 8 at the National Turkish Students’ Union General Headquarters.

### SUPPORT FOR THE EAST TURKISTAN CAUSE FROM ORGANIZATIONS

The program, which began with the recitation of the Quran, featured a closing

speech by Abdulahed Abdurrahman, the General Secretary of the East Turkistan Education and Solidarity Association. He expressed gratitude on behalf of the East Turkistan people to all the volunteer sister organizations, their leaders, and relevant individuals who contributed to the event.

Mujteba Said Dereji, the Deputy President of the National Turkish Students' Union, Jafer Akbal from the Erbakan Foundation, Osman Nuri Duman, the regional representative of the East Turkistan Information Center, and Tülay Gökshimen, the director of the documentary "Adı Soykırım," each delivered separate welcome speeches.

#### "I DRAW FOR GENOCIDE"

Additionally, Mr. Abdurreshit Eminhaji,

the General Secretary of the International Union of East Turkistan NGOs, took the stage and informed the participants about the ongoing and inhumane, systematic "genocide" crimes of the Chinese regime in East Turkistan and the current situation, as well as the activities of Uyghur organizations in the diaspora.

Following this, as a side event, the "I Draw for Genocide" campaign, previously announced, awarded the top three works with financial support, offering prizes of 5000, 3000, and 2000 Turkish Lira, respectively.

The program concluded with a prayer for East Turkistan and all oppressed regions.





## FOR UYGHURS, LI KEQIANG WILL BE REMEMBERED FOR REPRESSION

THE LATE CHINESE PREMIER PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN THE CRACKDOWN ON MUSLIMS IN XINJIANG, EXPERTS SAY. WHILE HAN CHINESE ARE SHOWING AN OUTPOURING OF GRIEF FOR THE LATE PREMIER LI KEQIANG, UYGHURS AND TIBETANS ARE NOT DISPLAYING ANY WARM SENTIMENTS FOR THE OFFICIAL, WHO IS REMEMBERED MORE FOR BEIJING'S REPRESSION THAN ANY ECONOMIC REFORMS.

Li, the second-ranked member of the Politburo Standing Committee of the Chinese Communist Party from 2012 to 2022, died of a heart attack on Oct. 26 at age 68.

He played an instrumental role in the Chinese government's crackdown on the predominantly Muslim Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities in (Xinjiang) that culminated in the mass detentions of an estimated 1.8 million people in internment camps in 2017 and 2018, two experts on the region said.

Other flagrant rights abuses included the torture of detainees, forced abortions and sterilizations of Muslim women, and forced labor that the United States and other nations have identified as genocide.

China has denied the allegations, saying the camps were vocational training centers.

Jojje Olsson, a Swedish journalist who runs Kinamedia, the country's biggest

new site on China, and a related newsletter, tweeted on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, that people should stop romanticizing Li as a "man of the people" just because he wanted less state control over the economy and didn't show his cruel side as openly as [Chinese President] Xi [Jinping]."

### Xinjiang PAPERS

Olsson went on to point out that in the so-called Xinjiang Papers, Li called for the implementation of the policies leading to hundreds of thousands of Uyghurs locked up because of their ethnicity.

Leaked in 2019 and first published by The New York Times, the Xinjiang Papers were hundreds of pages of documents detailing the crackdown ordered by Xi and spurred calls for global action to hold Beijing accountable for the abuses.

They told of how Xi called for a "struggle against terrorism, infiltration, and separatism" using the "organs of dictatorship,"

in internal speeches following an attack by alleged Uyghur militants that killed more than 30 people at a train station in 2014.

They included statements made by other Chinese Communist Party leaders, including Li, that gave rise to repressive policies, including the internment of Uyghurs and other in “re-education” camps, the sterilization of detained Uyghur women, and the use of Uyghurs in forced factory labor.

“As many has [sic] stated before, upholding ‘liberal’ Premiers like Wen [Jiabao]/Li as ‘reformers’ because they are a bit less hawkish than other CCP leaders is not only wrong; it’s disrespectful to Uyghurs or AIDS victims in Henan. There was [sic] no ‘reformers’ on CCP politburo level since 1989,” tweeted Olsson, who has been banned since 2016 from entering China.

### TAINTED LEGACY

Li served as governor and later party leader of Henan province in central China during a scandal over the spread of AIDS through the commercial sale of blood in rural areas, which officials tried to cover up.

Adrian Zenz, director of China Studies at the U.S.-based Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, who has spent years documenting China’s abuses against Uyghurs, tweeted that his recent research shows Li Keqiang’s economic

policy towards Uyghurs—forced labor.

Zenz says his peer-reviewed academic article provides proof that authorities in Xinjiang placed Uyghurs, who refused to accept state work arrangements, as part of a larger poverty alleviation through labor transfer scheme, into camps.

About Li, Zenz tweeted: “He argued that southern Xinjiang’s ‘3 million surplus laborer’ [sic] posed a ‘prominent problem,’ as they are ‘easily exploited by evildoers.’ They must be put to work.”

Tibetans also said Li did nothing to protect their human rights during his years in power, and in a 2018 visit to Tibet reiterated that it was an inalienable part of China.

“The harsh policies adopted against Tibetans and the minorities by the Chinese Communist leaders have remained the same,” said Bawa Kelsang Gyaltzen, the representative of the Office of Tibet in Taiwan. “Even under the premiership of Li Keqiang, the human rights situation of Tibetans inside Tibet remained atrocious and very concerning.”

“Even though the Chinese policies in Tibet became exceptionally restrictive and repressive under Xi Jinping’s leadership, there has not been a single Chinese official who has been vocal enough to talk about these atrocities and repression,” he said.



**OUTSIDE OF THE WELL-DOCUMENTED INTERNMENT CAMP SYSTEM, THE POVERTY ALLEVIATION THROUGH LABOR TRANSFER PROGRAM IS NORMALIZING FORCED LABOR FOR UYGHURS AND OTHER TURKIC PEOPLES IN CHINA, ACCORDING TO A NEW REPORT**

The use of Uyghur forced labor in China's so-called "reeducation camps" has been documented by journalists, scholars, and nonprofit organizations, based on eye-witness accounts, leaked official documents, and on-the-ground reporting. There is some evidence to suggest that China is phasing out internment camps for Turkic, mainly Muslim minorities

in the far western region of Xinjiang. But according to a new report, a more insidious and creeping atrocity is taking place.

In a paper titled "The conceptual evolution of poverty alleviation through labor transfer in Xinjiang" published yesterday, Adrian Zenz argues that China is pursuing a policy of mass

coerced labor under a separate system from the internment camps. His report also provides the first witness testimonies that Uyghurs who refused these state work assignments were sent to camps.

Such coercion is illegal under the International Labor Organisation (ILO), of which China is a member.

Zenz is an anthropologist who, since 2018, has been doggedly documenting human rights abuses against Uyghurs using Chinese government documents, leaked police files, and eye witness accounts. He is a director and senior fellow at the Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, which was authorized by the U.S. Congress in 1993.

His new paper examines Xinjiang's implementation of China's National Poverty Alleviation through Labor Transfer program, under which “surplus

rural laborers” are trapped in state-choreographed labor transfers under the banner of poverty alleviation and de-extremification.

This is a different policy from the mass internment regime that began in 2017 under then Party Secretary of so-called Xinjiang Chén Quánguó, under which hundreds of thousands and possibly more than 1 million Uyghurs were detained in euphemistically named Vocational Skills Education and Training Centres (VSETCs). Many of them have been transferred to factories in Xinjiang and around China, where they are forced to work.

However, there are millions more who have never been in a camp, but have been swept up in the Poverty Alleviation through Labor Transfer program. Documented examples include official government orders to withhold



“subsistence allowances for individuals who repeatedly refuse to participate in poverty alleviation projects,” to coerce “elderly persons to participate in seasonal labor transfers, including picking cotton,” and a state plan in one area to “round up ‘all women and other surplus laborers’ — 500 persons from only 391 households — to work in neighboring cities.”

According to Zenz’s research, village leaders, some with Chinese state-ordered quotas to fill and others at the behest of multinationals searching for sweatshop labor for Western brands, go door to door to round them up, luring them with get-rich-quick stories and a way out of poverty.

The fine print, which they are never privy to, is that the placements often include tight surveillance, political

indoctrination, compulsory Mandarin classes after a day on the shop floor, and the impossibility of returning home before the contract ends. To refuse this chance to “better themselves” also risks being singled out for detention as a troublemaker.

## TWO TYPES OF FORCED LABOR

In his report, Zenz outlines the critical differences between the two major strands of forced labor and presents key new evidence testimony of punishments awaiting rural Uyghurs who refuse to participate in government work programs.

With the closure of many VSETCs, the Poverty Alleviation through Labor Transfer policy is assuming more importance in Beijing’s long term plan, which is to strengthen and institutionalize its policy of compulsory labor among



the entire rural Uyghur population of Xinjiang, according to Zenz.

Zenz told The China Project, that not only was the state-mandated labor transfer system “active,” but that in fact, it was expanding. “It’s increasing, it’s intensifying, it’s becoming normalized, institutionalized, and maybe less visibly coercive as a result,” he said.

“If policy makers in international institutions misunderstand and think that forced labor is only linked to the camps, then the implications are that we are likely to have a policy that doesn’t effectively address what’s going on,” he warned.

The government rationale is that while the VSETCs administer intensive de-extremification to “cure” persons already “infected” with the “virus” of “religious extremism,” labor transfers are to preventively inoculate those who are not yet “infected,” according to Zenz’ report.

There is a common end game however which is to bring the entire rural Uyghur workforce to heel, by whatever means, by imposing Beijing’s definition of social stability amid a regional atmosphere not unlike an “open prison”.

While, according to Zenz, there is evidence to suggest the camps are being wound down and the “camp-to-labor pipeline” is no longer pursued by the state, the other track to forced labor is alive and well.

Chloe Cranston, Head of Thematic Advocacy Programs at Anti-Slavery International welcomed Zenz’s report as a counter to the corporate sector pursuing “business as normal” in the region amid claims the situation has improved.

“We have continuously underlined to companies and policymakers the complexity of the forced labor system, and that it extends beyond camp-linked labor,” she told The China Project.



“Businesses and investors must make sure they have no links to the region and governments should use all legislative measures within their control — such as import controls and sanctions, to put pressure on the Chinese government to end the persecution,” she told The China Project.

Rushan Abbas, executive director of Washington, D.C.-based non profit, Campaign for Uyghurs, told The China Project it was important to recognise different forms of state sponsored forced labor. “This is important to ensure we are not deceived by the Chinese government’s evolving tactics to disguise its human rights abuses, including Uyghur forced labor,” she said. “The gradual release of camp detainees for eventual placement for forced labor underscores the fact that forced labor can and does persist even after camp closures.”

### **THE HISTORIES OF “REEDUCATION” AND “POVERTY ALLEVIATION”**

The VSETC system itself evolved from the Re-Education Through Labor system that began under former leader Máo Zédōng. In the 21st century, “Vocational Training Schools,” were authorized by current leader Xí Jìnpíng, and implemented by Chen Quanguo, who took over as Party Secretary of so-called Xinjiang in 2016, after quelling dissent in Tibet.

According to Zenz, Chen’s purpose was to “create a camp-to-labor pipeline that starts with re-education without labor followed by a gradual release

process of short term camp-based skills training, job training in nearby factories alongside evening re-education, and then coerced work placements in factory parks or further afield.” Large numbers of eastern Chinese enterprises were spurred on by this to invest and build factories in Xinjiang. Ex-camp detainees were usually placed in securitised areas of factories, and forced to work in locked cubicles and sleep in locked dormitories.

The “poverty alleviation” track to coerced labor also has a long history. Uyghurs were setting off to inner China as far back as the 1990’s to look for work and a better life. Private companies, often incentivised by the state, also recruited village Uyghurs for inner China jobs. Initially workers were free to come and go and leave the jobs if they wanted.

Ainisa, a Uyghur exile in London speaking to The China Project, said her village friends often told her in the late 1990’s of groups of girls who were recruited for a couple of years to work in factories in the East. “Parents were reluctant to let them go,” she said, “but they needed the money and they all went together, so it seemed safe.”

But the party-state was worried by the trickle of independent individuals setting off “unsupervised ” to seek their fortune, and by 2003, the government had set its own goals to transfer and supervise the placements of 150,000 laborers annually.

Concerned still by a lack of “macro-

level steering,” the 11th Five Year Plan for 2006–10 ordered subsidies, information networks and the services of employment companies to “strengthen the organization of the workforce,” and to promote its own transfers of what became known as “surplus” rural laborers.

Compulsion increasingly became a hallmark of the policies. Zenz cited an article in a 2007 Chinese Journal of Population Science quoting a township leader in Kashgar’s Konasheher county as saying: “Nowadays, more farmers in the suburbs of cities and towns go voluntarily, but in remote rural areas there is indeed a phenomenon of compulsion...Working in the countryside...it is impossible to [do this] without any force.”

Poverty alleviation in the early days was the major driver but increasingly social stability, the elimination of “troublesome elements,” the dilution of communities and a host of political objectives became

the prime objectives.

Uyghur farmers were forced to sell their land usage rights to free them up for factory work. Young women were coaxed to work in eastern China textile factories to “prevent early marriages” and “promote social modernisation.”

In 2007, according to Zenz’s report, 210 female middle school graduates from Kashgar’s Payzawat county were forcibly locked into a vocational training school to learn Chinese to prepare them for work in eastern China. The girls were then taken to a Tianjin textile factory, 2,562 miles away on the opposite side of China, confined to dormitories, surveilled by cameras and forced to work “excruciatingly long hours.” They could only quit after completing a one year contract.

By 2014 central government priorities for Xinjiang shifted from economic



development to “de-extremification” and stability maintenance. Then-Premier Lǐ Kèqiáng was worried by Xinjiang’s three million “surplus laborers” who posed a “particularly prominent problem,” arguing that “people without land, employment, or a fixed income have nothing to do and wander all day” and will “be easily exploited by evildoers.”

### ARBEIT MACHT EINHEIT?

Xi Jinping saw employment as “conducive to ethnic interaction, exchanges and blending” leading ethnic groups to “imperceptibly study Chinese culture”.

By 2017 Chinese companies in the region had adopted this framing. Aksu Huafu Textiles Co., which operates the world’s largest textile mill in Xinjiang, stated on its website: “Due to lack of information, lack of courage, and fear of going out, large numbers of rural surplus laborers are idle at home, which increases the burden on their families and brings hidden dangers to public security. Aqsu Huafu actively engaged with government departments, actively absorbed surplus labor...to gradually transform them from farmers to industrial workers,” it said.

By the 13th Five-Year Plan, 2016–2020, Beijing was pressing for a “systematic expansion” of Uyghur relocation to other parts of China to “receive education, employment and residence.” This included the establishment of 25 industrial parks intended to create 150,000 jobs. In this period, a target of 2.2 million labor transfers was exceeded by 30% — with some individual Uyghurs

being transferred more than once.

Recruitment teams were going door to door, forbidden to leave until their targets had been achieved. Coercion was increasingly common and abuses were reported. Older people and ethnic minority women were to be “accelerated” through satellite factories, because the “inner motivation” of locals was “insufficient and must be ‘stimulated’, and “people’s outdated mindset of “waiting, relying, wanting” must be ‘eradicated”.

“Curing poverty means to first cure ignorance and backwardness,” were the government orders, resulting in “drastic curtailment of voluntary migration and self-chosen work,” according to Zenz.

“Thought work”, making people aware of their “deficiencies”, calling out “laziness” and public shaming sessions became de rigeur. “Let lazy persons speak [in front of all], let them blush and sweat, stimulate the inner motivation of the whole village, especially the inner motivation of poor households.”

Between July and October 2017, many street cleaners from southern Xinjiang appeared in the northern city of Kuytun according to Anar Sabit, a Kazakh camp survivor whose testimony featured in *The New Yorker*. These were “transferred workers,” according to her government-employed relative, who had told her they worked during the day and were “locked” in dormitories at night.

In September 2018 a village in Altay

prefecture, in the north of Xinjiang bordering Kazakhstan, reported a labor transfer rate of “over 95%,” boasting that it had “realized a village without idlers.”

In 2018, 221,000 laborers were transferred from 22 poor counties in southern Xinjiang to other regions with the explicit mandate to, “train all who should be trained”, emphasizing intensive political indoctrination, “gratitude to the party,” Chinese language skills, work discipline, and military drilling.

Centralized state-led transfers involved accompanying officials and police guards, writes Zenz.

Since Chen’s replacement in 2021 by Mǎ Xīngruì a technocrat from Guangdong

experienced in economic development, “Xinjiang has been shifting from Chen Quanguo’s highly mobilizational, campaign-style labor transfers to a more normalized and institutionalized strategy that emphasizes maintaining labor placement achievements through intensified monitoring,” said Zenz in his report

### A SOURCE OF CHEAP LABOR

By 2022 labor transfer “person times” (as opposed to “people” since each person can be transferred multiple times) reached three million, and stable employment rates of 99.88% in one area at least observed by Zenz were maintained through “close monitoring.”

“Clearly,” says Zenz, “transferred



Uyghurs constitute cheap and easily exploited labor amid soaring nationwide labor costs.”

But China’s forced labor policies directly contravene ILO rules that define forced labor as work that is involuntary, without free and informed consent, and enforced through a menace of penalty. Those who choose not to comply are at highest risk of punishment while those who opt in, also do so “in the context of multiple un-freedoms,” “and are unable to freely leave their work,” said Zenz.

Among the leaked cache of Xinjiang Police File documents, Zenz discovered a classified internal directive detailing the fate of those refusing to comply with poverty alleviation measures and labor transfers, who were liable to face “strike

hard” detention. “Non-participation in state employment programmes also directly increased a person’s internment risk,” he found.

Abbas of the Campaign for Uyghurs confirmed Zenz’ findings. “Whether it is through the camp-to-forced-labor pipeline, the labor transfer system, or other methods of forced labor that have existed under the communist regime for decades, Uyghurs have no agency to refuse displacement or slave labor,” she said. “Dr. Zenz’s research also offers evidence that Uyghurs are punished for not participating in labor transfer programs. These conditions are forced upon the Uyghurs, as they have no option but to accept this fate for their existence.”



Uyghurs without stable or state-designated employment face higher risk of detention, said Zenz in his report, noting that Uyghur informants confirmed that in 2017 that participation in state policies was a “strategy for escaping internment.”

In his report, Zenz presents the first witness testimony to-date that confirms the practice of detention for refusing labor transfers. Gulzia (pseudonym), a former camp detainee, whose identity Zenz has confirmed and with whom he has spoken, testified how one of her cell mates from a rural Kashgar township had been detained for harboring “extreme religious thoughts” for wanting to stay at home to care for her two small children and help her elderly in-laws with farming, rather than accept a government-organized factory work assignment.

A second cell mate, likewise had been detained for “non-cooperation with [government] arrangements”, also a factory work assignment.

Beijing’s overarching goal through these policies is to enforce “lasting sociocultural change,” Zenz notes.

### THE PROBLEM WITH ILO

But tackling the Chinese state’s rejection of accusations against it is fraught, said Zenz in his report. “The widely used ILO indicators of forced labor are ill-suited, making it easier for Beijing to sign ILO agreements and pretend that coerced non-Han employment is now a normalized and acceptable arrangement,” Zenz said, adding that a “broader, society-wide analysis of recruitment and transfer mechanisms” is vital if the abuses caused by China’s policies are to be curbed.



“Although the situation may be changing, overall, we remain in a status quo situation where there is a mass arbitrary detention and involuntary labor. For example, it is possible (though evidence remains limited, given the difficulty of accessing independent information from the region) that new individuals are not being ‘re-educated,’ instead they may be given unjust prison sentences without access to a fair trial, and, in addition, as Dr Zenz underscores, the state labor transfer system does not just continue, but is growing,” Cranston of Anti-Slavery said.

“Given the ongoing genocide and the lack of unfettered access to the Uyghur region, it would be foolish to believe that Uyghurs have a free choice in the matter of being pressed into forced labor in any and all of its manifestations. Uyghurs are unable to openly discuss the atrocities

without facing severe repercussions for themselves and their families,” said Abbas.

“At the end of the day all this matters to policy makers and ultimately to the person in the street because we don’t want to be complicit. We don’t want to finance the police state by buying goods made with forced labor,” Zenz told The China Project. .

“But to do so there has to be a clear understanding of Chinese propaganda and policy. We need to say ‘yes,’ there is poverty; ‘yes’ some of what the Chinese government is saying is true, but they conceal the main problem that this is a very large forced labor scheme, that carries a high risk of state imposed forced labor.”

Ruth Ingram Published October 26, 2023





## 'ELITICIDE' AS CHINA JAILS UYGHUR INTELLECTUALS TO ERASE CULTURE

Rahile Dawut and Ilham Tohti are among hundreds of Uyghur thought leaders silenced amid a crackdown.

Over a fortnight, a Uyghur folklorist missing since 2017 was revealed to be serving a life prison for “separatism,” while another Uyghur scholar who had vanished into Chinese custody years earlier appeared on shortlists and oddsmakers picks for the 2023 Nobel Peace Prize.

The cases of ethnographer Rahile Dawut, whose life conviction in December 2018 was uncovered by a U.S. NGO only last month, and economist Ilham Tohti, put away for life on similar charges in 2014, share key similarities that highlight the personal and family tragedies behind China’s relentless assimilation policies in East Turkistan or so-called *Xinjiang*.

Both Dawut, who was born in 1966, and

the 53-year-old Tohti built their academic careers inside the Chinese system, teaching at prestigious universities and releasing their work through major state publishing houses. The two scholars collaborated with and were respected as authorities by their Chinese and international peers.

Dawut created and directed *Xinjiang University’s* Minorities Folklore Research Center and wrote dozens of articles in international journals and a number of books on the region and its culture.

An economist at the Central University for Nationalities in Beijing, Tohti ran the Uyghur Online website, set up in 2006, which drew attention to the discrimination facing Uyghurs under Beijing’s rule over East Turkistan and its increasingly restrictive religious and language policies.

The families of Dawut and Tohti share the common fate of not having heard anything from their jailed loved ones since 2017, the year that China's harsh crackdown in East Turkistan went into overdrive with the establishment of a network of internment camps for Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other Turkic groups.

### 'NO INTELLECTUAL RESISTANCE'

The Dui Hua Foundation, which revealed Dawut's life sentence, noted estimates of as many as several hundred Uyghur intellectuals who have been detained, arrested, and imprisoned since 2016.

RFA Uyghur has documented scores of disappearances and detentions of Uyghur writers, academics, artists and musicians in recent years.

In early 2021, after years of cumulative reports on the internment camp system in East Turkistan, the United Nations, the United States, and the legislatures

of several European countries, officially branded the treatment of Uyghurs as genocide or crimes against humanity.

China has angrily rejected the genocide charges, arguing that the "reeducation camps" were a necessary tool to fight religious extremism and terrorism in reaction to sporadic terrorist attacks that Uyghurs say are fueled by years of government oppression.

Beijing has also waged an information counterattack with a global media influence campaign that spreads Chinese state media content to countries in Asia and beyond, invites diplomats and journalists from China-friendly countries on staged tours of East Turkistan and promotes pro-China social media influencers.

### AWARNESS-RAISING ON GENOCIDE

Last month, the pushback saw Chinese diplomats pressuring fellow United



Nations member states not to attend a panel on human rights abuses in East Turkistan sponsored by a think tank and two rights groups on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly in New York.

Tohti, who has been nominated for the Norwegian Nobel Committee's Peace Prize since 2020, was listed by the U.S. news outlet Time as one of top three favorites to win the medal this year, following Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and jailed Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

Tohti was given higher odds on many of London's famed betting sites of winning the prize than the recipient, jailed Iranian activist Narges Mohammadi.

"There are many human rights issues around the world that are equally as important as the suffering that the

Uyghurs are going through, but the international status and power of the perpetrators of these human rights abuses aren't considered equal," said Jewher Ilham, Tohti's daughter.

"The Chinese government is known to have a much more powerful political and economic influence than the Iranian government in the western world," she told RFA Uyghur.

It is not clear that China would be moved by a Nobel Prize to release Tohti or moderate policies in East Turkistan, where Communist Party chief Xi Jinping appears to be doubling down on draconian security measures and policies to suppress Uyghur culture.

Beijing lashed out at the Nobel Committee and imposed trade sanctions on Norway after the Nobel 2010 went to Chinese



dissident writer Liu Xiaobo.

With Liu in jail, the Chinese capital Beijing won the right in 2015 to host the Winter Olympics, and Beijing largely shrugged off the global outcry when in 2017, Liu became the first Nobel laureate to die in jail since German journalist and Nazi opponent Carl Von Ossietzky perished in custody in 1938.

For Jewher Ilham, the mention of her father as a Nobel contender is “still a huge recognition for his work and also an opportunity for awareness-raising on the broader Uyghur genocide problem.

“I hope more people will learn about Ilham Tohti and will learn what is happening to hundreds of thousands of Uyghur families,” she told RFA Uyghur.



**A UYGHUR FILM-MAKER WHO WAS ARRESTED IN BEIJING EARLIER THIS YEAR WILL APPEAR ON TRIAL IN XINJIANG ON WEDNESDAY.**

**IKRAM NURMEHMET, 32, WAS TAKEN FROM HIS HOME BY CHINESE AUTHORITIES ON 29 MAY AND FLOWN TO ÜRÜMQI, XINJIANG'S CAPITAL, WHERE HE IS BEING HELD IN PRE-TRIAL DETENTION ON UNKNOWN CHARGES, ACCORDING TO HIS SUPPORTERS.**

Born and raised in Ürümqi, Nurmehmet is an independent film-maker based in Beijing, where he lives with his wife and infant son.

Hours after his arrest, police called his wife to notify her of his transfer to (Xinjiang) and asked her to bring clothes for him to the airport. There, she was able to meet Nurmehmet briefly, in the company of three officers who handed her his wedding ring and amulet. He told her she, “must now do the best she can”, a source close to the family told the Guardian.

Nurmehmet’s mother, who lives in Ürümqi, filmed his arrival at the airport in Xinjiang. When she questioned the officers with him, she was told her son was “under investigation”.

Known for portraying Uyghur protagonists in his work, Nurmehmet has directed many short films, some of which have been selected by film festivals in China and abroad. One film, *Elephant in the Car*, tells the story of a Han Chinese woman sharing a taxi with two Uyghurs.

“His work always focuses on Uyghur people’s real lives, not in a propaganda way,” a source close to Nurmehmet said by phone over an encrypted messaging app. “He’s one of the young Uyghur directors who engages with Chinese society the most, but unfortunately in the end it [led] him being arrested. He’s very responsible for his family. He has a boy who [for] six months has not seen his father.”

A month before his arrest, Nurmehmet had received a call from the Xinjiang

authorities requesting his return to Ürümqi to investigate the loss of his identity card. He refused and hung up. Later, his mother told him a childhood Uyghur friend he had once hosted while studying in Turkey had allegedly been detained, and warned that Nurmehmet might be under suspicion by association.

Before moving to Beijing, Nurmehmet had spent six years studying film-making at the Marmara University in Istanbul.

Maya Wang, the associate director in the Asia division at Human Rights Watch, said Uyghurs with any connections to Islam, central Asia or the Middle East were automatically under suspicion of terrorism from Chinese authorities. Many were rounded up during a campaign of “collective punishment” and imprisoned arbitrarily without trial.

The Chinese state launched its “Strike Hard” anti-terrorism campaign in Xinjiang) in 2014, after several terrorist attacks reportedly orchestrated by Uyghur separatists. Since then, an estimated half a million people are believed to have been imprisoned during a crackdown that escalated in 2017. Among those with known prison terms, the average time of imprisonment is 12.5 years, according to Human Rights Watch.

“There’s less international attention now because the Chinese say they have closed the [detention] camps,” Wang said. “[But] the camps are part of a bigger, multifaceted campaign against Uyghurs, including the use of long prison sentences. Uyghurs continue to live in a

state of fear.”

Nurmehmet had previously been identified on a list of terrorism suspects known as the “Shanghai List”, which was obtained in 2020 by Australian hackers who looked through more than 1m surveillance records from the Shanghai Public Security Bureau.

Last month, a leading Uyghur professor, Rahile Dawut, was reportedly sentenced to life in prison for “endangering state security”. A specialist in Uyghur folklore

and traditions, she was reported missing six years ago.

A spokesperson for the Chinese embassy in London said: “We are not aware of the specifics that you mentioned. China is advancing law-based governance on all fronts and will continue to uphold the rule of law, conduct law enforcement and protect lawful rights and interests of individuals or organisations in accordance with the law.”



**MEXMUTJAN MEMET IS SUFFERING FROM LIVER DISEASE HIS WIFE ATTRIBUTES TO PRISON CONDITIONS.**

**A UYGHUR MAN SERVING A 20-YEAR SENTENCE IN XINJIANG IS IN CRITICAL CONDITION DUE TO POOR CONDITIONS AT HIS PRISON, ACCORDING TO HIS WIFE, WHO HAS CALLED FOR PRESSURE ON CHINESE AUTHORITIES TO RELEASE HIM AND REUNITE HIM WITH HIS FAMILY IN TURKEY.**

Mexmutjan Memet's story is all too common for Uyghurs who have moved abroad only to be arrested on their return to China for actions deemed crimes by the state, including exercising their right under the country's constitution to uphold their cultural and religious traditions.

Memet, a 48-year-old former staffer at the agricultural bureau in East Turkistan's Korla (in Chinese, Kuerle) city who went on to open a business shipping pears, moved to Turkey with his family in 2015 to provide his children with better educational opportunities.

In 2016, he accompanied his 78-year-old mother Xelchem Pazil back to Korla after she visited his family in Turkey following an Islamic pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia's holy city of Mecca, only to have his passport confiscated by authorities on his arrival, his wife Kifaye Éhsan told RFA Uyghur.

The following year, he was arrested and sentenced to 20 years in Korla Prison for reasons that included violating China's one-child policy, providing religious education to his children and traveling to Turkey.

An RFA investigation found that at least seven members of Memet's family, including his brothers and mother, were sentenced to prison after his return, although his mother was released this year for treatment after becoming seriously ill in a prison in Sanji (Changji) city, near the regional capital Urumqi.

Éhsan recently contacted RFA Uyghur

expressing concern for her husband's well-being after she learned that he had become severely ill in prison from liver disease and related complications and is "in need of urgent medical attention."

"The police said ... that his condition is severe and requires medical attention," she said. "They also said that if anything goes wrong with him, they won't be responsible."

RFA contacted the Korla City Prison Administration Office and spoke with an official who confirmed the existence of "an inmate who has liver disease and serious complications," but said he did not have any specific information about the individual's identity or the exact diagnosis.

"I became aware of the severity of his illness in the course of my work," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the matter with the media. "As of now, the individual is still in prison."

The official said that staff at the administration office are "prohibited from becoming involved in cases that fall under the jurisdiction of other parties," and could not provide further details.

#### HEALTHY PRIOR TO IMPRISONMENT

Éhsan, like many other Uyghurs living abroad, has been unable to establish direct contact with her relatives since 2017, when authorities in Xinjiang began detaining Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities in a vast network of "re-education camps" and implemented strict

controls on the flow of information in and out of the region.

She said she now lives in constant fear that she will receive notice that Memet's health has declined further, or worse.

"All of us living abroad are shattered – our suffering is indescribable," she said. "As for my children, they too have been deeply affected by this news, both emotionally and psychologically. As a mother, I can sense it, but words cannot fully convey it."

Éhsan said that prior to his arrest, Memet was "in good health" and running his pear packaging business, which was shut down by authorities following his detention. She said that after the business was closed, the families of Memet's six siblings in Korla and his family in Turkey had lost their primary source of income.

RFA also contacted an employee at the Korla Prison Hospital who confirmed that Memet is suffering from several ailments – including liver disease, heart problems and high blood pressure – although he is currently "in stable condition" after "receiving treatment at the hospital for the past two months."

But he said that Memet's condition "was extremely critical" on his arrival at the prison, and that he "required an extensive period of care." The employee, who also declined to be named, said that the hospital has been monitoring Memet's

condition "daily."

"He was diagnosed with liver disease and high blood pressure, and he is currently on medication for his heart and blood pressure," he said. "It seems that he had preexisting liver issues, which led to complications this time. He has experienced a significant decline in weight and physical stature."

#### CALL FOR PRESSURE ON CHINA

Éhsan, however, dismissed the hospital employee's assessment that her husband had been in poor health prior to his incarceration.

"When my husband returned to our homeland, he was in good health and had a normal weight," she said. "They told us that [among other conditions,] he had Hepatitis B. It is likely due to the poor conditions of the prison, as it is a contagious disease."

She called on international NGOs to exert pressure on the Chinese government to facilitate his access to medical treatment outside the prison, as well as his immediate release.

"I don't hold any expectations from the Chinese government [that they will free him]," she said. "My only hope is that human rights organizations or other entities can assist in securing my husband's release, provide him with the necessary treatment, and reunite him with our family."



According to Radio Free Asia (RFA), within a week, the bodies of three Uyghur women were removed from the Baykol Women's Prison in Gulja, Xinjiang. While the exact cause of death of these three Uyghur women is unknown, it has been revealed that among them were two Uyghur sisters in their early thirties and a Uyghur mother aged 75.

According to information reported by RFA, it has been determined that there are 10,000 Uyghur women held in the Gulja Baykol Women's Prison who have been brought from various parts of Xinjiang. The prison has been in operation for six years, coinciding with the period of widespread arbitrary arrests that began in 2017. In the past year, it has been particularly noted that there has been a significant deterioration in the health of the so-called "prisoners" and an increase in deaths.

Last week, among the three martyred individuals, it is believed that Melike and Merziye, the sisters, were from the Araosteng village, which is part of Gulja, and the elderly woman was Aysem from a different ward. Besides torture, it is thought that she passed away due to the harsh prison conditions and inadequate nutrition.

The world-renowned Australian television channel ABC, which operates under the complete control of China and visits pre-arranged locations, reported that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime is attempting to turn East Turkistan into a tourist destination after years of brutal repression.

In its special report published on September 30, 2023, ABC stated that, as a result of China's pressures, East Turkistan has become an isolated,

essentially gigantic “open-air prison.” It was emphasized that since Xi Jinping’s visit to East Turkistan in 2014 and his vow to “show no mercy” against terrorism,

the oppression in East Turkistan has only intensified, and leaked documents have also provided evidence of China’s systematic “genocide” crimes.



[Due to concerns about forced labor in China, some US lawmakers have called for a ban on seafood in two Chinese provinces.](#)

Voice of America reports today that a group of US lawmakers have asked the Biden administration to ban seafood processed in two Chinese provinces from entering the US market due to concerns about human rights violations. They also argued that Chinese companies that use forced labor should be banned from doing business with American companies. It is the latest effort by U.S. lawmakers to ban imports of Chinese goods because of China’s human rights abuses, which have fueled growing tensions between China and the U.S. on trade and other issues.

The U.S. House Committee on China Affairs quoted a non-profit organization’s

report as saying: “The fishing fleet has violated human rights. A seafood processing plant in China’s Shandong province forced Uyghurs into labor.

The committee said the punishment was necessary to enforce US laws banning the importation of products made with forced labor.

Recently, China has been committing genocide by mass abducting Uyghurs, forcing them into concentration camps, and forcing them to renounce their religious and ethnic identities. In addition, China is also deporting Uyghurs to Chinese provinces and forcing them to work in Chinese factories. Although many reports have been published about it, the Chinese regime has been silent on all crimes.



Eighteen Uyghur families are living in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, comprising approximately 100 Uyghur individuals, facing the risk of deportation by Pakistani authorities because they lack legal identity, passports, or residence permits. With the sudden announcement by the Pakistani government of “cleansing illegal immigrants,” these Uyghurs in Rawalpindi cannot live peacefully and await their fate of deportation once again.

It’s worth noting that most of them fled from Afghanistan to Pakistan with their fathers during the Afghan-Soviet War, around 30 to 40 years ago. At that time, these Uyghurs were registered as “Afghan refugees” in the Pakistani government offices. However, according to Pakistani immigration law and the provisions against illegal immigrants, these Uyghurs who arrived from Afghanistan couldn’t

obtain any passports or residence permits in Pakistan.

Apart from living in Pakistan as “illegal immigrants,” they didn’t have legal nationality even in Afghanistan, the country they fled from. They don’t possess any documents proving their Afghan citizenship. Therefore, since they lack legal documents to confirm their citizenship in any country, they simply refer to themselves as “We are Uyghurs.”

If the Pakistani authorities were to deport them as Afghans to Afghanistan, currently controlled by the Taliban, they may be in even greater danger.

We understand that these Uyghurs in Rawalpindi are extremely concerned about the possibility of being returned not only to Afghanistan but even to China. Despite having no connection to China, officials

from the Chinese embassy visited these Uyghurs in Pakistan 10 years ago. They claimed that the Chinese government had reached out to these Uyghurs through the Chinese Expatriate Association in Rawalpindi in previous years, promising them financial assistance and facilitating their children's education, and they took a list of their names.

For this reason, these Uyghurs awaiting their fate at the Pakistani border ask, "If China asks, will Pakistan send us back to China?" They are in an extremely distressing situation.

These Uyghurs in Rawalpindi informed us in our recent interview that Pakistan is no longer a safe haven for them, and they want to move to a third safe country. They have also submitted a request to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to extend their stay in Pakistan.

Mr. Omar, the head of the Omar Uyghur Foundation in Pakistan, who has been assisting Uyghurs in Pakistan, told us three weeks ago that Uyghurs have been seeking help from the United Nations refugee agency for several years, but to no avail.

On October 23, when Mr. Omar had our phone interview, he mentioned that after reporting the situation of the Uyghurs in Rawalpindi to Radio Free Asia, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees contacted him twice and inquired about the Uyghur situation in Rawalpindi.

Mr. Omar confirmed that, although

Pakistani authorities have not pursued these Uyghurs, Pakistani property owners who rent them houses are pressuring them to vacate the premises by November 1.

We asked the Uyghur representative in Rawalpindi, Mr. Abdul Ahad, about the situation they are facing.

Mr. Abdul Ahad stated that ten days ago, and today, October 23, employees of the United Nations Refugee Agency in Pakistan asked him and several other Uyghurs about their situation. They inquired if they had been threatened by Pakistani authorities or the police and asked questions like, "What difficulties are you facing?" He mentioned that they asked about the Uyghurs in Rawalpindi, their names, addresses, and family situations.

According to Abdul Ahad, as the deadline for the deportation of illegal immigrants approaches, Uyghurs in Rawalpindi are hiding in their homes and not sending their children to school. Furthermore, the property owners who rent out the houses they live in continue to pressure them to vacate their homes.

We contacted the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Pakistan and informed them about the measures they are trying to take in response to the Uyghur emergency situation in Pakistan. However, they did not respond to our inquiries.

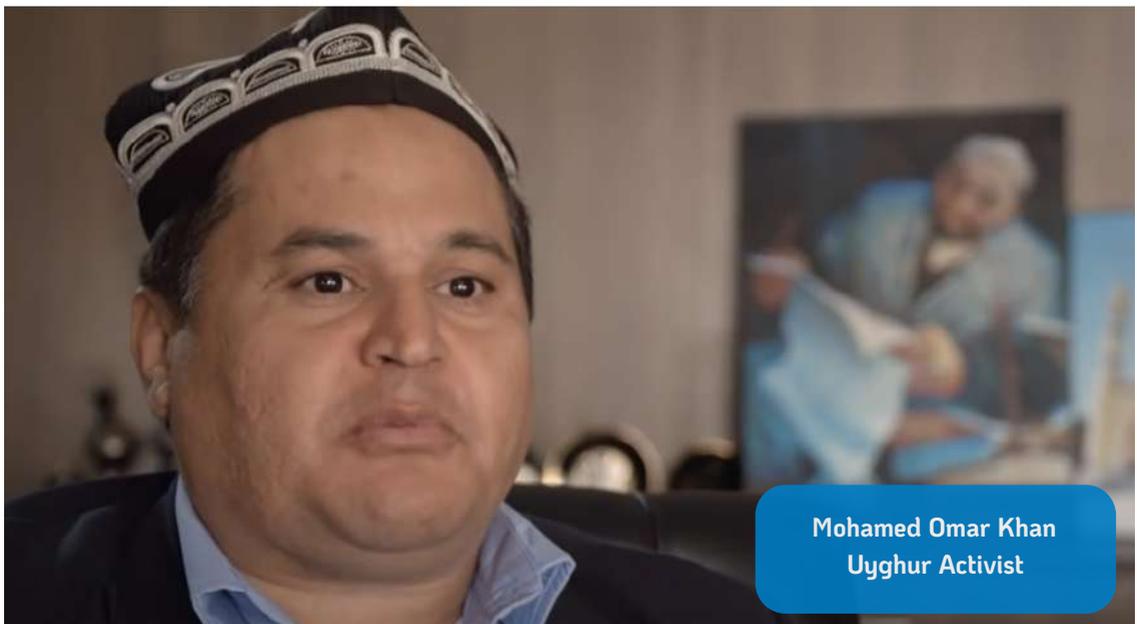
We reached out to the "Justice for All" organization, one of the Islamic organizations concerned about the Uyghur

situation in the United States, regarding the emergency situation of 18 Uyghur families living in difficult conditions in Pakistan. Abdul Malik Mujahid, the organization's president, granted us an interview and said, "Pakistan has been a refuge for Afghan refugees. For many years, Pakistan, which welcomed Muslim refugees from Afghanistan, the Rohingya, and India, has also hosted the Uyghurs. For example, one of my neighbors in Pakistan was Uyghur. Despite Pakistan's feeling that it is necessary to take such action against illegal immigrants due to its war against terrorism and economic issues, attempting to deport Muslim refugees is considered a wrong step. Unfortunately, refugee deportation for political reasons happens in Germany as well as in the United States. It is entirely true that Pakistan wants to prevent terrorist activities on its soil, but it should welcome and accommodate Uyghur refugees because they are the refugees

who came to Pakistan fleeing state-sponsored persecution."

To the best of our knowledge, Uyghur organizations like the World Uyghur Congress are currently seeking ways to address the urgent issue of Uyghurs in Pakistan. Ms. Louisa Greve, a worker at the Uyghur Human Rights Project in Washington, stated to our radio station that the situation of Uyghurs in Pakistan is highly concerning.

Human Rights Watch is deeply concerned about the repatriation of any Uyghurs to China. No government should send Uyghur refugees back to China at this time. According to international law, no one should be forcibly returned to a country where they may face physical punishment, unlawful detention, or other serious human rights violations. Otherwise, it would be a violation of international law.



**Mohamed Omar Khan**  
Uyghur Activist



**Day will come! The oppressed people of occupied East Turkistan  
and Palestine will achieve freedom and peace!**

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# istiqlal

**What is happening in East Turkistan?**

**What is true and what is false?**

**The “ISTIQLAL” journal uses reliable sources, evidence and witnesses to reveal China’s genocide crime and shine a light on the oppression in East Turkistan as well as expose China’s fake news propaganda.**

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