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Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)
LEGAL AID BOARD

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Information on the treatment of the Uigher people in China. Reports relating to discrimination against this ethnic group. Reports relating to the treatment of people who actively campaign for the rights of the Uigher people.

The China chapter in the *World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)* annual report, published in September 2010, notes:

"This year was particularly marked by the violence that erupted on July 5, 2009 in Urumqi, capital of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR), in the north-west of China, following a demonstration that was harshly repressed by the police. The protests started after a violent riot in a factory in Shaoguan (Guangdong province) during which Uighur workers were killed. However, it was the result of long-standing tensions between Uighur and Han Chinese ethnic groups, based on the systematic targeting of Uighurs by Governmental authorities. On July 8, the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China declared that the situation was masterminded and organised by the "three forces" of terrorism, separatism and extremism at home and abroad. In October, a total of 21 people were tried and convicted of crimes such as "murder", "damage to property", "arson" and "robbery", in violation of minimum standards of due process and fair trials, and nine received death penalty." (World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) (13 September 2010) *China: "Steadfast in Protest; Annual Report 2010; China"*)

A news article from *The Guardian* newspaper published in August 2010, reports:

"Seven people have been killed and 14 others injured in a bomb attack in China's restive western region of Xinjiang, officials reported.

The deadliest known assault in the area since last summer's race riots came when a member of the Uighur ethnic group drove a three-wheeled vehicle packed with explosives into a crowd in a suburb of Aksu city.

Police have arrested a suspect, who was injured in the blast and condemned what they described as the work of terrorist groups.

'The casualties are innocent civilians of different ethnic minority backgrounds,' a government spokeswoman, Hou Hanmin, said in the regional capital, Urumqi. She said four of the injured were in a serious condition.

But a police official said the target of the attack was a group of Uighur residents who were working with local security officials to patrol the streets and report crimes.

Beijing has struggled to maintain order in Xinjiang, which borders several conflict zones including Afghanistan, Pakistan and Kashmir.

Last summer, at least 198 people were killed when a protest by Muslim Uighurs – the biggest ethnic group in Xinjiang – turned into a rampage against Han Chinese settlers, many of whom have moved into the region to take advantage of the oil, gas

and coal boom.” (The Guardian (20 August 2010) *Bomb kills seven in China's Xinjiang region*)

An August 2010 *Reporters Without Borders* report states:

“Reporters Without Borders condemns the jail sentences that were imposed on three Uyghur webmasters in a trial held behind closed doors in Urumqi on or around 20 July. The webmasters - Dilshat Perhat, Nureli and Nijat Azat - were accused of endangering state security by posting content that the Chinese government regards as politically sensitive.

Calling for their immediate release and the quashing of their convictions, Reporters Without Borders accuses China's authorities of persecuting its Uyghur minority,

‘Despite the lack of information about the trial, the government's intention was clear, to shut down the spaces available for expression,’ Reporters Without Borders said. ‘The three webmasters have been unjustly punished and their sentences are disproportionate. These attempts to intimidate must stop.’

Dilshat Perhat, the webmaster of the Diyarim site, was given a five-year sentence. Nureli of the Salking website got three years, while Nijat Azat of Shabnam got ten years.

Dilshat Perhat's brother Dilmurat decided to speak out despite being warned there would be reprisals against Dilshat if he talked to the media. Dilmurat insisted that his brother was not an enemy of the government, that he often deleted comments from the website and that he even contacted the police repeatedly to warn them about a peaceful demonstration on 5 July 2009.” (Reporters Without Borders (2 August 2010) *Jail terms for three Uyghur webmasters accused of jeopardising state security*)

A July 2010 *Amnesty International* report notes under the heading ‘Discrimination against Uighurs’:

“Discriminatory government policies, including language policies that are making Mandarin Chinese the sole language of instruction in schools, restrictions on Uighurs’ ability to practice their religion freely, and discrimination in employment are fuelling discontent and ethnic tensions in the XUAR.

Uighurs interviewed by Amnesty International for this briefing – even those with high levels of education and training - testified to their difficulties in finding a job which they directly attributed to discrimination. Uighurs who were employed said they were paid a fraction of what their Han Chinese colleagues were paid for doing the same job. Some also reported that they were not allowed to speak Uighur at their work place, even with Uighur colleagues or Uighur customers. In 2009, Nur Bekri, the regional governor, was quoted in the Chinese press as saying that the promotion of Mandarin Chinese as the language of instruction in Uighur schools was to be pursued because “(t)errorists from neighbouring countries mainly target [Uighurs who] are relatively isolated from mainstream society as they cannot speak Mandarin.”

The US Congressional-Executive Commission on China has monitored job recruiting advertisements published on government websites. They have found advertisements that reserved positions for Han Chinese in civil servant posts, state-owned enterprises, and private enterprises, indicating direct government involvement in

discriminatory hiring practices and also implicit endorsement of and failure to prevent discrimination in private hiring.

Before the July 2009 protests, discriminatory government policies had sparked large-scale clashes in the XUAR, including in 1990 and in 1997. The Chinese authorities labelled these as “counter-revolutionary” or “separatist” protests, and cracked down on them in a heavyhanded way.” (Amnesty International (2 July 2010) *China: "Justice, justice": The July 2009 protests in Xinjiang, China*, p. 8)

A June 2010 *Radio Free Asia* news report states:

“HONG KONG—A man detained in connection with the leaking of information to international news media about the death in custody of a fellow Uyghur in northwest China has been missing for eight months, according to his wife, who now lives in Kazakhstan.

Enver Israil, 33, was detained last year on Oct. 1 along with around 20 other men in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) by authorities who were unable to locate his elder brother, Ershidin Israil.

Police were searching for Ershidin Israil, 38, for allegedly releasing details of the beating death of Shohret Tursun, whom Uyghur police had detained on suspicion of participating in deadly ethnic riots in the capital Urumqi in July 2009.

Enver Israil's wife Asiye Kerimova is a native of Kazakhstan, whose border lies near the Israil family home in Ghulja, in Qorghas [in Chinese, Huo Cheng] county, Ili prefecture.

“As you know, political prisoners in China don't have the right to hire lawyers or to meet their family. I'm getting this information through businessmen who travel to Kazakhstan,” she said.” (Radio Free Asia (11 June 2010) *Uyghur Held in Leak Case*)

The China chapter of the May 2010 *Amnesty International* annual world report states under the heading ‘Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region’:

“The authorities intensified already tight restrictions on freedom of expression, association and assembly in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in the north-west of China following the eruption of unprecedented violence in Urumqi on 5 July. The government reported that 197 people were killed, the majority of whom were Han killed by Uighurs, and more than 1,600 were injured. Uighurs had posted online calls for a protest in reaction to government inaction over the beatings and deaths of Uighur migrant workers by Han workers in a toy factory in Guangdong province in June.

Eyewitness accounts of events on 5 July suggest that police and security forces cracked down on peaceful Uighur demonstrators to prevent thousands from marching through the city. According to these reports, police beat peaceful protesters with batons, used tear gas to disperse the crowds, and shot directly into crowds of peaceful demonstrators with live ammunition, most likely resulting in many more deaths.

Following the unrest, the authorities detained hundreds on suspicion of participation in the protests, including boys and elderly men, in door-to-door raids. Family and friends of several detainees denied that the detained individuals had any role in the

violence or the protests. Dozens of detainees remained unaccounted for at the end of the year.

In August, the authorities announced that they were holding 718 people in connection with the unrest, and that 83 of these faced criminal charges including for murder, arson and robbery. On 9 November, the authorities announced the execution of nine individuals, after unfair trials. Based on their names, eight were Uyghurs and one was Han Chinese. In December, an additional 13 individuals were sentenced to death and the authorities announced the arrest of an additional 94 people on suspicion of involvement in the July unrest.” (Amnesty International (28 May 2010) *Amnesty International Report 2010 - The State of the World's Human Rights*)

A further *Radio Free Asia* news report from May 2010 notes:

“HONG KONG—New accounts detailing the detention of ethnic Uyghurs in northwest China in the wake of deadly unrest show how authorities have targeted members of the mostly Muslim minority, keeping them in custody without access to family and often without indicating when they might be tried or freed.

The detentions, near Ghulja [in Chinese, Yining] in China’s northwestern Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), involved several members of three Uyghur families on charges of separatism and religious extremism.

The first detention occurred on July 7, 2009, and involved four adult children from the same family in Bulaq Dadamtu village in Dadamtu township. The family’s patriarch, Turghan Polat, said his children have been imprisoned since then.

“The authorities arrested my daughter because they claimed she taught religious classes to other women in my neighborhood. My other kids were arrested because they were reading some kinds of [religious] books. I don’t know any other reasons. They have been in jail for almost 10 months,” he said.

‘Some have said my daughter is jailed in Urumqi. All I have are the detention notices. I don’t have any official notice about my daughter’s trial, how many years she got, or any explanation about her detention.’” (Radio Free Asia (26 May 2010) *New Details on Arrests*)

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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