

The plight of Uyghur imprisoned writers in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China

International PEN Uyghur Centre | 10 November 2011 UYP Press/02

15th November is PEN International's Day of the Imprisoned Writer. There are hundreds of writers worldwide who are imprisoned or harassed solely because of their work. We - the Uyghur PEN Centre - would like to add our voices to this special day by urging all International PEN Centres and other international human rights organizations to pay attention once more to the plight of the imprisoned Uyghur writers in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China and condemn China's brutal crackdown on Uyghur writers, journalists and webmasters.

We estimate that more than 400 Uyghur intellectuals, including writers, journalists, web masters, and bloggers are still in Chinese jails, arrested in the aftermath of the "5th July" 2009 ethnic conflict in Urumchi, regional capital of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China. We are unable to confirm this estimate because of the Chinese government's lack of transparency and accountability.

The Uyghur PEN Centre will dedicate this special Day to the two Uyghur writers who are due to be released from prison.

On the PEN International's Day of the Imprisoned Writer, we are particularly concerned about the whereabouts and safety of:

Mehbube Ablesh - a Uyghur journalist and poet, former worker for the state run Xinjiang People's Radio Station. She was arrested in August 2008, sentenced to three years in prison. She served her sentence at the Xinjiang Women's Prison in Urumqi (Xinjiang Number 2 Prison). She is due for release on 25th July 2011. She is an Honorary member of the Independent Chinese PEN and Uyghur PEN centres.

Abdulghani Memetemin - a Uyghur writer, teacher and translator from Kashgar of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. He was arrested on 26th July 2002 and sentenced to 9 years in prison. His term expired on 25th July 2011. He is an Honorary member of the German and Independent Chinese PEN Centres (ICPC).

Due to China's tight control of information in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, we are currently not able to obtain any information concerning their safety and whereabouts. We urge the authorities to ensure that no Uyghur writers are tortured or ill-treated in prison.

Uyghur PEN Centre asks all the PEN international centres to take this opportunity to raise concerns about the safety and whereabouts of all Uyghur imprisoned writers including the two Uyghur writers who are due to be released from China's prisons.

The International PEN Uyghur centre calls again on the international community to conduct an independent investigation of the Chinese authorities' extra judiciary punishment of Uyghur writers and other Uyghurs connected to the "5th July" protest. Here are the names of the few convicted Uyghur writers that have been revealed by Chinese media: **Gheyret Niyaz; Dilshat Perhat; Gülmire Imin; Memetjan Abdulla; Nijat Azat; Nureli Obul; Tursunjan Hezim.**

We are alarmed by the continued persecution of Uyghur writers, journalists and webmasters/web editors who are particularly targeted by the Chinese authorities for practising their right to free expression. The authorities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China subject Uyghur journalists and writers to harassment, arbitrary detention and flawed trials for publishing anything related to current political concerns in the region, including Uyghur ethnic identity, beliefs, history, etc.

We are appalled at China's extrajudicial punishment of Uyghur journalists and web editors. Overall, the crackdown on Uyghur intellectuals has intensified after the 2009 protests; the number of sentences handed down to Uyghur intellectuals convicted of so-called "separatism" is alarming.

We call on the Chinese authorities:

- to stop the ill treatment and torture of Uyghur writers, journalists and all other political prisoners in China's jails.
- to stop targeting Uyghur intellectuals including writers, journalists and web editors.

Please send appeals to:

Chairman of the XUAR People's Government
Nur BEKRI Zhuxi
Xinjiang Weiwuer Zizhiqu Renmin Zhengfu Bangongting
2 Zhongshanlu, Urumqi 830041
Xinjiang Weiwuer Zizhiqu
People's Republic of China
Fax: +86 991 2817567 or 2803621
Email: master@xinjiang.gov.cn
Salutation: Dear Chairman

Secretary of the Central Politics and Law Commission of People's Republic of China
Zhou Yongkang Shuji
Zhongyang Zhengfa Weiyuanhui
9 Xihuangchenggenbeijie
Beijingshi 100032
People's Republic of China
Salutation: Dear Secretary

Minister of State Security of the People's Republic of China
GEN Huichang Buzhang
Guojia Anquanbu
14 Dongchang'anjie
Beijingshi 100741
People's Republic of China
Salutation: Your Excellency

For more details about Uyghur imprisoned writers:

The 77th PEN International Congress Resolutions: Resolution on China –Uyghur Issues
http://www.uyghurpen.org/The_77th_PEN_International_Congress_Resolutios.pdf

State sponsored persecutions on Uyghur intellectuals
<http://www.uyghurpen.org/pen-press-id17.html>

Amnesty challenges China on Xinjiang riot accounts:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10491758>

Amnesty International: 5 July 2009 Urumqi protests and crackdown - Two years later: the suppression of fundamental rights continues
http://blogs.amnesty.org.uk/blogs_entry.asp?eid=7820

China: "justice, justice": the july 2009 protests in xinjiang, china
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ASA17/027/2010/en/425679a8-6fde-40b5-a38b-83699e5ac1bc/asa170272010en.pdf>

"We are afraid to even look for them" - human rights watch
<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/xinjiang1009webwcover.pdf>

International PEN Uyghur Centre

<http://www.uyghurpen.org>