

## Perhat Tursun, Uyghur poet and writer sentenced for 16 years imprisonment

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Perhat Tursun, one of the most celebrated Uyghur poet and writers, was detained around January 2018. In February 2020, reports emerged that Chinese authorities had sentenced him to 16 years in prison. His current situation is unknown.



From the University of Colorado, Darren Byler, published an article on February 5, 2020, on the Sup China website, providing detailed information about Perhat Tursun’s disappearance. He wrote on the SupChina “Perhat was disappeared at the height of his powers by the Chinese state, a victim of the government’s re-education campaign in Xinjiang. Nearly two years ago, on January 30, 2018, I received confirmation that Perhat Tursun had been disappeared. Last week the news filtered out that he has reportedly been given a 16-year prison sentence.”

“The news of Perhat’s disappearance leaked out in coded messages. A mutual acquaintance told Tahir Hamut, one of Perhat’s closest friends, that Perhat had been “hospitalized.” Tahir, a prominent poet, filmmaker, and literary critic who found a way to come to the United States in 2017.”<sup>1</sup>

Perhat Tursun was born in Atush 1969, a city near Kashgar in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, China. He graduated from Beijing Nationality University. He worked as a researcher for the Xinjiang People’s Arts Centre in Ürümqi. Perhat Tursun is well known for his poetry and novels. He is the author “One Hundred Love Lyrics” and books “The Art of Suicide” and “Messiah Desert”.<sup>2</sup>

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom also reported about Perhat Tursun’s case.

“Information on his exact whereabouts and the accusations against him was unavailable. His detention came amid a campaign of arbitrary mass detention in which XUAR officials

targeted Uyghurs and members of other largely Muslim ethnic groups for reasons including expression of ethnic, cultural, or religious identity. In February 2020, reports emerged that authorities had sentenced Tursun to 16 years in prison; these reports were not confirmed, and further details, including the charges against Tursun, the trial court, and the date of sentencing, were unavailable.”<sup>3</sup>

On 8th February, the third anniversary of Perhat Tursun’s arrest, PEN International’s Creative Witnesses’ solidarity action series on the Asia/Pacific region was dedicated to Perhat Tursun, campaigning and demanding his release from a Chinese prison. Performances by the artists, including Kurdish painter Zehra Doğan, Uyghur filmmaker and performer Mukaddas Mijit, Canadian/American poet Julia Balm and London-based musicians George Jones and Pearl Bloor, all their performances released on PEN International’s YouTube Channel.<sup>4</sup>

Joshua Freeman, Postdoctoral fellow, Princeton Society of Fellows, introduces and presents a translation of Uyghur poet Perhat Tursun’s poems.<sup>5</sup>

Aziz Isa Elkun, from Uyghur PEN Online Revitalization Project director, recently searched Perhat Tursun’s case and studied his literary work. He translated a poem written by Perhat Tursun and used as a pre-word for his one of the most controversial novel “The Art of Suicide”.<sup>6</sup>

### ***The heart***

*Let's cease the blame saying life has no meaning  
One day the loneliness will have reached its' peak  
If we could not find a solution for our desire  
We can be still quietly able to shed our tears.*

*Let's cry, may our tears look beautiful  
If it falls calmly for love  
Regardless if we always search for our bad luck  
It's a luck when every night turns into a dream.*

*Let's not seek the beauties from the rose  
The trace of blood is beautiful that left on the thorn  
When we remember the blood-pumping heart  
Its' struggle like the melody of a beautiful song.*

*From Perhat Tursun's novel "The Art of Suicide".  
Translated by Aziz Isa Elkun.*

<http://www.azizisa.org/en/the-heart>

**The Uyghur PEN Centre urges all PEN International members, Civil Societies, Human Rights Organizations, and Governments to pay attention to Perhat Tursun’s situation, and demand from the Chinese government about his immediate release. We call on you take action to save hundreds of unknown Uyghur writers' and poets' lives who are now suffering inside the Chinese internment camps in East Turkistan (Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region).**

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<sup>1</sup> *The disappearance of Perhat Tursun, one of the Uyghur world's greatest authors. Society & Culture - The disappearance of Perhat Tursun, one of the Uyghur world's greatest authors. Darren Byler Published February 5, 2020*

<https://supchina.com/2020/02/05/disappearance-of-perhat-tursun-uyghur-worlds-greatest-author/>

<sup>2</sup> *Meet China's Salman Rushdie. The Uighur novelist published The Art of Suicide in 1999. Next thing he knew, he was getting death threats. Now he's finally writing again.*

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/10/01/china-xinjiang-islam-salman-rushdie-uyghur/>

<sup>3</sup> *Perhat Tursun. The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom*

<https://www.uscirf.gov/perhat-tursun>

<sup>4</sup> *On 8<sup>th</sup> February, the third anniversary of Perhat Tursun's arrest, PEN International's Creative Witnesses' solidarity action series on the Asia/Pacific region was dedicated to Perhat Tursun*

<https://youtu.be/5r4S4vRPntg>

*New episode of PEN International's Creative Witnesses premiered in solidarity with writers at risk in the Asia/Pacific Region*

<https://pen-international.org/news/new-episode-of-pen-internationals-creative-witnesses-premiered-in-solidarity-with-writers-at-risk-in-the-asia-pacific-region>

<sup>5</sup> *Uyghur Poetry in Translation: Perhat Tursun's "Elegy"*

<https://medium.com/fairbank-center/uyghur-poetry-in-translation-perhat-tursuns-elegy-902a58b7a0aa>

<sup>6</sup> *The heart. A poem by Perhat Tursun*

<http://www.azizisa.org/en/the-heart/>