



What Is Baren Revolution That Uyghurs Worldwide Have Gathered To Commemorate?



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WHAT IS BAREN REVOLUTION THAT UYGHURS WORLDWIDE HAVE GATHERED TO COMMEMORATE?

Written By Anmol Singla

Uyghur activists gathered around the world on April 5 to protest against atrocities by China in East Turkistan on the 33rd anniversary of the Baren Uprising.

On April 5, 2023 (Thursday), members of the Uyghur diaspora from East Turkistan, under the leadership of the East Turkistan Government in Exile, held peaceful demonstrations in various locations such as Istanbul, the Washington DC metropolitan area, Brussels in Belgium, and Bangladesh. These demonstrations were held to commemorate the 33rd anniversary of the Baren Uprising that occurred in 1990 in East Turkistan, it is

also referred to as the Baren Massacre or the Baren Revolution.

Istanbul, Turkey

Uyghur activists assembled outside the Chinese Consulate in Istanbul on April 5 to voice their opposition to the atrocities committed by China against the Uyghur community. They held protests despite the adverse weather conditions.

At approximately 11 am (local time), the protest commenced with the recitation of Quranic verses. Roughly 120 Uyghur individuals, both men and women, participated in the protest, which was addressed by Abdullahad Udun, a local Uyghur leader, as well as Omer Qarim, an activist and General Secretary of East Turkistan Human Right Watch (ETHR).



Abdullahad Udun, in a press statement, strongly condemned the brutalities committed by China, which have resulted in the deaths of numerous innocent Uyghurs. Udun highlighted that China has been perpetrating genocide in East Turkistan, which is referred to as East Turkistan in China. He emphasised that the world has been watching as mere spectators. Udun called upon Turkey and the Islamic world to take immediate and effective measures to prevent the forced genocide of the Uyghurs, which is being carried out by China in East Turkistan.

During the protest, Omer Qarim, who represents the East Turkestan Scholars Union, called on the Islamic world to take a firm stand against the enslavement of

Uyghurs in East Turkistan. It is worth noting that Turkey is home to one of the largest Uyghur diaspora communities in exile. The Uyghur community in Istanbul has been actively protesting against the atrocities being committed by China, and they have been seeking information about the whereabouts of their missing family members.

Dhaka, Bangladesh

Meanwhile, across various regions of Bangladesh, demonstrations and gatherings were organised to commemorate the 33rd anniversary of the Baren Revolution in East Turkistan, also known as Xinjiang in China.

In Dhaka, a conference was held by

the Bangladesh Khilafat Andolan (BKA) with its leader, Shaheed Zaidin Yusuf, presiding over the event. At the gathering, participants expressed their condemnation of China's unlawful annexation of East Turkistan (Xinjiang) and the mistreatment of innocent Uyghur Muslims.

Following the conference, a protest was organised to bring attention to the issue of resettling Han Chinese in East Turkistan, which has the effect of diminishing the Uyghur population. The protestors strongly urged the Chinese government to cease such actions. The Bangladesh Khilafat Andolan (BKA) expressed

their solidarity with the people of East Turkistan in their quest for freedom from China's illegal occupation, and appealed to the international community to support the cause of Uyghur Muslims.

The Bangladesh Khilafat Andolan (BKA) expressed their backing for the people of East Turkistan in their pursuit of freedom from China's unlawful annexation and called on the international community to step up and assist the cause of the Uyghur Muslims.

The Bangladesh Mohajir Welfare and Development Committee (BMWDC) arranged protest demonstrations and



formed human chains in the vicinity of Dhaka University. Approximately 200 protestors distributed leaflets detailing the injustices inflicted upon the Uyghur Muslims by the Chinese government. The members of the BMWDC also handed over a memorandum to the Chinese embassy.

Brussels, Belgium

The Belgium Uyghur Association, under the leadership of one Ekrum

Tursun, honoured the Baren revolution and protested against the Chinese government's atrocities in East Turkistan by organising a candlelight vigil at the Atomium in Brussels. The participants in the vigil exhibited posters that illustrated the events of the Baren revolution.

Prior to the candlelight vigil, the Belgium Uyghur Association arranged a gathering in support of the imprisoned Uyghur

activist, Ilham Tohti's daughter, Jewher Tohti, on March 30th. The event also featured Europe-based fashion designer Louise Xin, who has been drawing attention to the Chinese government's use of forced labour through her fashion shows. The attendees engaged in a discussion of the Baren revolution during the gathering.

Washington DC

Members of the community gathered



an unprecedented period of Chinese oppression. As part of its long-standing efforts to colonise, assimilate, and control the population, the Chinese government was reportedly compelling Uyghur and other Turkic women to undergo forced abortions.

After enduring 41 years of Chinese colonisation and occupation, the villagers of Baren reached a breaking point. They had recently witnessed 250 local women being forcibly separated

in front of the Chinese Embassy in Washington DC for a peaceful protest. According to Uyghur activist Ilshat H Kokbore, the protest was aimed at promoting “the fearless spirit of the warriors in Baren Township who dedicated their lives to freedom and dignity”.

What is the Baren Uprising of 1990?

During the spring of 1990, Baren Township, located near Kashgar in Chinese-occupied East Turkistan, experienced

from their newborns, and they could no longer tolerate the ongoing oppression. In response, they launched peaceful protests, but these were met with no response from the Chinese authorities. Consequently, they resorted to taking up arms in self-defence against the Chinese invaders.

The Uyghur separatists, who were demanding greater autonomy and independence for East Turkistan, took over the town and attacked local

government buildings, police stations, and other symbols of Chinese authority.

The Chinese occupation forces reacted by deploying an overwhelming number of People's Liberation Army soldiers to Baren Township, which resulted in a large-scale massacre of innocent civilians, including women and children. Various sources estimate that the death toll ranged from hundreds to thousands of Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples who were indiscriminately killed by heavy weaponry and airstrikes.

The Baren Uprising was one of the most significant incidents of Uyghur unrest in China in the 1990s. It highlighted the longstanding tensions between the Uyghur population and the Chinese government over issues such as autonomy, cultural rights, and economic development. It also demonstrated the Chinese government's willingness to use force to suppress Uyghur dissent and maintain its control over East Turkistan.

The impact of the Baren Uprising is still

felt in East Turkistan today. The incident highlighted the deep-rooted tensions between the Uyghur population and the Chinese government over issues such as autonomy, cultural rights, and economic development. The Chinese government has long been accused of discriminating against the Uyghur population and suppressing their cultural and religious identity.

In recent years, the Chinese government has intensified its crackdown on the Uyghurs, detaining an estimated one million Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in internment camps. Reports of forced labour, forced sterilisation, and other abuses have sparked international condemnation and calls for action.

The Baren Uprising is thus seen as a precursor to the ongoing human rights crisis in East Turkistan. It underscores the need for greater recognition of the Uyghur people's rights and autonomy, as well as the importance of international attention and action to address human rights abuses.



今天，为纪念巴仁乡维吾尔勇士在33年前的抗争，弘扬巴仁乡勇士为自由、尊严而献身大无畏精神；我们来到中国驻华盛顿大使馆前抗议示威，祈祷、开斋。

维吾尔人一代又一代，继续着自由独立的艰难征程；回看我举旗时，我还是笑傲江湖骄子，而今，一批驰骋国际政治舞台的青年人携儿女接过了我们的星月旗！





RECOUNTING CHINA'S BAREN CRACKDOWN, ACTIVIST RUSHAN ABBAS WANTS WORLD TO SPEAK OUT ON UYGHURS

Written By: Heena Sharma, Apr 07, 2023

In the events before and after the 1990 Baren Uprising, Chinese police brutality reportedly killed some 3,000 Uyghurs. As the world marks the 33-year anniversary of the Baren township clashes which took place between April 5 and April 10, some questions still remain unanswered. But they go beyond the fight for the independence of East Turkestan. It is about the rights of ethnic Uyghur in East Turkistan.

WION spoke to Uyghur American activist Rushan Abbas, the founder of nonprofit group Campaign for Uyghurs, as she recounts the horror of Baren uprising and opens up about her sister Gulshan Abbas who was sentenced to 20 years of jail in China.

She termed the events that took place in Baren Township in 1990 as nothing short of “horrific”.

Recalling about the horrendous crackdown, the Uyghur American activist said Chinese government, as part of their ongoing campaign of colonisation, forced assimilation and population control, began forcing Uyghur and other Turkic women to undergo abortions.

“This act of violence against innocent civilians was the last straw for the villagers of Baren, who had already suffered for decades under Chinese occupation,” she told WION.

In response, the Uyghurs peacefully protested, but when their voices went unheard, “they took up arms to defend themselves” against the Chinese

“invaders”.

“Instead of listening to the concerns and grievances of the people, the Chinese occupation forces responded with brutal force. They flooded Baren Township with People’s Liberation Army soldiers and launched a massive massacre of innocent civilians, including women and children,” she added.

Over the extent of the violence and bloodshed, she expressed shock, saying thousands of innocent Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples were massacred, some even subjected to heavy weaponry and airstrikes.

“The people of Baren were simply fighting for their basic human rights and freedom, yet they were met with unimaginable violence and cruelty from the Chinese government.”

She urged the international community to continue to speak out against such atrocities and stand in solidarity with those who are fighting for their basic human rights and freedom.

The leaked Xinjiang Police Files tainted China’s rights situation which the country still claims stand unsullied. The in-depth reports exposed not only East Turkistan internment camps but went straight down to revealing the information and images of the detainees too. The leak coincided with the former UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet’s visit to China on May 23, 2022, an outcome of which only drew

criticism from many supporting rights of Uyghurs and speaking against China’s “genocide.”

Abbas said that Volker Turk, as the newly appointed UN High Commissioner for human rights, has a responsibility to uphold and protect human rights, including those of individuals in Tibet, Hong Kong, and East Turkistan.

It is important to note that the Chinese government has consistently denied the existence of human rights abuses in these regions, despite numerous reports to the contrary.

Abbas asserted that Turk must do the right thing and hold the perpetrators accountable.

“Any efforts by the UN or other international bodies to address these issues will likely be met with opposition and pushback from the Chinese government.”

She said the situation in East Turkistan is a grave concern for human rights advocates around the world, “including the detention of my sister Dr. Gulshan Abbas and the millions of other Uyghurs.”

Gulshan Abbas was arrested by China in March, 2019 on terrorism-related charges after disappearing in September 2018.

“Given China’s track record of denying access to independent experts and rejecting calls for accountability, it is difficult to predict the likelihood of her release or any significant progress in addressing the Uyghur Genocide.”



From the CCP propaganda video: left, a young Uyghur woman dressed as a Buddhist, dances in the Kuqa Mosque, to persuade the audience of the natural cultural blend between religions: right, a “veiled” Uyghur Buddhist beauty waits behind the latticed screen before entering the prayer hall to dance.

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**NOT CONTENT SIMPLY WITH DISMANTLING
 UYGHUR CULTURE, THE CCP IS INTENT ON STEPPING
 UP THE HUMILIATION OF THE TURKIC PEOPLES
 OF EAST TURKISTAN**
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**EAST TURKISTAN’S GRAND KUQA MOSQUE PROFANED
 IN A CHINESE PROPAGANDA VIDEO**

by Ruth Ingram

Bitter Winter, 04/04/2023

Attempts by the CCP to further undermine Uyghur cultural heritage and blur historical ties to the East Turkistan, came to light recently through a state-sponsored promotional video that has horrified Uyghur exiles.

Distributed among the diaspora communities in their distress, the clip was sent to Bitter Winter by Istanbul-based Uyghur journalist Musa Abdulehed ER. “decades under Chinese occupation,” she told WION.

The CCP propaganda video. Obviously, we do not agree with the disrespect shown in the video towards the Islamic culture and the mosque. We post it, as Uyghurs activists did on social media, as evidence of how the CCP’s Sinicization campaigns work, and to preserve it in case the Chinese authorities will remove

The cameo portrayal of the Grand Kuqa Mosque, the second largest in East Turkistan, as a Buddhist-Muslim religious hub inextricably bound up with Han Chinese history and culture, in which a Buddhist dancer takes center stage among the pillars of the central prayer hall has angered and humiliated exiled Uyghurs.

Not only is this one more government step to further Sinicize the region, but a gross humiliation and affront to their religion, says exiled poet Aziz Isa Elkun, now based in the U.K. Their cultural roots are being torn out and their religion mocked, he complains.

We are taken up the steep brick-stepped stairway of a 1930’s reconstruction of the original sixteenth century building that was destroyed by fire, beloved by Uyghurs everywhere. We approach the imposing double gated entrance, with the help of a



Ascending the steps of the Grand Kuqa Mosque, a young Chinese reporter aims to illustrate that Uyghurs are really the same as the Han Chinese, and their religion is rooted in Chinese history. She then enters the Muslim worship space bare-headed and without removing her shoes

jeans-clad, youthful Han Chinese woman who will introduce us to the history and background of this religious center, “with Chinese characteristics.”

Without a headscarf, she wanders nonchalantly through the doors into a pillared hall, keeping her shoes on. The next minute, a Uyghur dancer dominating the prayer area, dressed in full Buddhist orange regalia writhes characteristically in Buddhist style to soft Chinese music.

The narrator speaks in muted tones of the centuries of Buddhist and Islamic cultures woven inseparably through the centuries. “The long river of the setting sun,” the “clattering of silhouetted horses” galloping across the plain. We are introduced to a “Uyghur beauty” outlined as if “veiled” behind the latticed window. She represents the “daughter of China’s history,” and through history we can understand the culture of the great

Chinese nation, she intones.

Kuqa is inextricably part of China, she concludes. The softness and elegance of the Central Plains is woven together with the blood of the Western regions. “They combine to be as one,” we are told. The culmination of multicultural integration throughout the centuries, is met here, in the “Kuqa Temple.” The setting sun casts a long shadow through the “traditional Chinese window latticework.” The pillars, the painted beams are magnificent.

We should remember this, she urges the listener. Kuqa, the people and the religion are Chinese.

Kuqa has a special place in the heart of poet Aziz Isa Elkun, well known to Bitter Winter as we have traced his exiled journey of pain and longing through the removal of his father’s desert grave and his poetry.

Billeted to the city during his university



The provocatively dressed young Uyghur dancer, swirls in Buddhist fashion to prove Uyghur Islam came from Buddhism. “Remember” where Uyghurs came from, is the final message to a Chinese audience. “They are the same as us,” is the message.

entrance exams in 1988, he used to walk past and visit the building every day. When he saw the video, he told Bitter Winter, his heart “was broken.” “There are so many sacred sites now that have been completely destroyed by the CCP,” he said, adding that the video was one more humiliation to his people.

He had seen footage of the British royal family visiting mosques around the world, taking off shoes, and the women, even Queen Elizabeth, wearing a scarf. Referring to the disrespect shown by the reporter and the dancer, “this desecration does nothing to glorify the so-called Chinese culture’s 5000 years of history,” he said. “Their disrespect to our religion shames them.”

Kuqa, formerly known as Qiuci, had been one of the foremost Buddhist centers in the sixth century, spreading from India before Islam appeared around the thirteenth century. “Yes Uyghurs were

Buddhist; extremely devoted and eager to propagate their faith in those days,” said Elkun. The city had occupied a strategic position on the Northern Silk Road, bringing trade and prosperity. The remnants of the Buddhist period are spread around the hills and rocks around the city in caves and painted murals.

But by the end of the fourteenth century Islam had become well established and Buddhism largely vanquished. Most Uyghurs would consider themselves Muslim today, although there is a small but growing Christian minority among them.

According to 2019 research commissioned by the Uyghur Human Rights Project, “Demolishing Faith, The Destruction and Desecration of Uyghur Mosques and Shrines,” Beijing has been dismantling Uyghur and Turkic religious and cultural sites in earnest in recent years. Hundreds of mosques, particularly



small, neighborhood buildings have been destroyed or repurposed and sharing the same fate, the leaders of their communities have been imprisoned.

Further research conducted recently by Professor Rachel Harris and Aziz Elkun, her husband, “The Complicity of Heritage: Cultural Heritage and Genocide in the Uyghur Region,” has shown that on UNESCO’s watch, and with Beijing’s approval, several treasures of intangible cultural heritage across Uyghur, Kyrgyz, and Kazakh cultures have also been dismantled and are in danger of disappearing altogether.

The latest video together with other similar CCP publicity stunts, is just the tip of the iceberg of the cultural indignities Uyghurs and other Turkic people are being subjected to in the Uyghur heartland today. “The insults are deliberate,” says Aziz. “They are intended to undermine us, but also, in the light of its purely Mandarin voiceover and subtitles, to deceive the Chinese people who are not so informed about our history.” He said the video’s message was one of “assimilation, caricature, cultural tropes and falsehood.”

“It is a gross insult to our beliefs and a disgrace,” he said.



The unveiled Chinese reporter stares through the “Chinese lattice windows” of the Kuqa Mosque

By Jonathan Head
BBC News, Bangkok

The death of a 49-year-old Uyghur asylum-seeker in Thailand has prompted pleas from rights groups to find a humane solution to the plight of around 50 Uyghur men who have been detained for nine years.

Aziz Abdullah died after he collapsed in the Immigration Detention Centre in Bangkok where he was being held.

He was part of a wave of more than 350 Uyghur asylum-seekers who fled from East Turkistan in western China in 2013, and were detained in Thailand.

China has been accused of committing crimes against humanity against Uyghur Muslims and other minorities in East Turkistan, where human rights groups believe more than a million people have been held in a vast network of detention camps in recent years. Beijing, which calls them “re-education camps”, denies all

DEMOLITION OF KASHGAR’S KHAN BAZAAR CREATES UNCERTAIN FUTURE FOR UYGHUR SHOP OWNERS



Kashgar’s centuries-old Khan Bazaar, seen at left in a Dec. 21, 2022, image, is being demolished by Chinese authorities. The results of the destruction can be seen in the photo at right, taken on March 22, 2023. Authorities in East Turkistan say they want to upgrade the area and replace dilapidated structures. Credit: Maxar Technologies (L); Planet (R)

By Shohret Hoshur for RFA Uyghur

2023.04.05

Police arrested three people who opposed the work in the name of modernization.

Qasimjan Abdurehim remembers Kashgar's centuries-old Khan Bazaar as a thriving marketplace where Uyghur merchants traded fabrics and modern-day tourists strolled along the pedestrian street that ran down the middle of it.

Last month, workers began demolishing the bazaar for "optimization" purposes — renovations to upgrade the area and replace what they said were dilapidated structures with modern ones.

Uyghurs such as Abdurehim believe the move is another step by the Chinese government to force the mostly Muslim ethnic group to assimilate into the mainstream culture and wipe out their culture and heritage.

A short video posted on the TikTok app showed that most of the shops' stairs, windows and doors had been destroyed. Market supervision officials confirmed that demolition and reconstruction efforts were under way.

"They tore down the old structures and built new ones, which they claimed to be earthquake-resistant," said Abdurehim, who is in his 40s and now works as a real estate agent in Virginia.

This isn't the first case. When Chinese authorities razed Kashgar's iconic Grand Bazaar, the largest international trade

market in all of East Turkistan, in 2022, they did not retain any of the culturally distinctive traits of the market.

Three arrested

Fearful they would lose their businesses forever, some Uyghur shop owners in the Khan Bazaar quarreled with government workers when the demolition began, a neighborhood committee member said.

Police arrested three people including Bahtiyar, a 16-year-old whose father was imprisoned after 2017, when Chinese authorities began detaining Uyghurs in "re-education" camps and prisons and subjecting them to severe rights abuses that the United States and some western parliaments have said amount to genocide and crimes against humanity. The teenager was helping his mother run the shop on weekends, the member said.

Ongoing demolition and construction of Uyghur structures in northwest East Turkistan have deprived some families of their residential homes, businesses and arable lands. Some communities have lost their mosques and ancient bazaars to authorities' modernization efforts.

Claims by Chinese authorities that they are now demolishing the Khan Bazaar to renovate the old buildings "do not fit with reality," Abdurehim said when he heard about the recent demolition.

He said authorities had renovated the bazaar several times since the 1980s, including another "optimization" campaign that occurred sometime between 2000 and 2010 to improve

building quality and safety.

But each renovation project deprived some Uyghurs of their homes and shops because they could not afford the renovation fees, he added.

Chinese businesspeople with ample financial means and political backing intervened and bought the property at below-market prices, thereby gaining stakes in the Khan Bazaar, he said.

“That was, I think, a deliberate ploy devised by the government,” he told Radio Free Asia.

Residents’ comments drew attention

The bazaar sits across from the 15th-century Id Kah Mosque, which has been mostly closed for worship since 2016 amid a severe crackdown by Chinese authorities on the religion and culture of the Uyghurs in East Turkistan.

“Standing in front of the famous Kashgar Id Kah gate and looking through it, one could see a bustling street bazaar on the left side,” recalled Abdurehim, who last saw the place in 2017, when the former teacher and school principal went to the U.S. on a business trip and did not return.

Remaining Uyghur families, especially those whose heads had been detained in camps or prisons in recent years, worried about losing their homes and shops in the bazaar because they would not be able to pay the renovation fees, said a person familiar with the situation. The

source declined to be identified for safety reasons.

Because of the repression of Uyghurs in East Turkistan, the families carefully shared their concerns to local cadres, who issued and distributed demolition notices to area residents. But instead, their comments drew the attention of local political and legal organizations, the source said.

As a result, police officers, political and legal cadres and neighborhood committee members went to the scene to surveil shop owners and homeowners during the March destruction, he said.

One policeman told RFA by phone that officers, along with the political and legal committee, market supervision, and neighborhood committee members, were present. They all reminded the residents and shop owners to pay attention to social stability, he said.

An employee at the Kashgar-Central Asia International Travel Agency said authorities were tearing down the bazaar because the buildings were old, and that the renovation work would be completed by May 1.

“The shops and buildings there were shabby, and the government wants to improve its image by renovating this place,” he said.

Translated by RFA Uyghur. Edited by Roseanne Gerin and Malcolm Foster.



2023 IJ4EU IMPACT AWARD WINNER: THE XINJIANG POLICE FILES

The Xinjiang Police Files is an investigation by a team of independent outlets that sheds light on the Chinese State's alleged detention of over a million Uyghurs in internment camps

The investigation, involving journalists from ten European media houses, revealed previously unknown details, including confidential instructions from the authorities and speeches by Chinese officials. The leak contained never-before-seen photos of the inside of the camps and evidence of mass internment and arbitrary detention. The investigation triggered a worldwide response, with

several foreign ministers calling for transparent investigations into China's human rights violations.

Ahead of the 2023 IJ4EU Impact Award Ceremony, we spoke to Christoph Giesen, Der Spiegel Correspondent in Beijing, about The Xinjiang Police Files. Read more about the project here.

What initially inspired your motivation

to investigate such a tough topic as the Uyghur issue?

I've been travelling to the region since 2009, when I was still a student. As a China correspondent, I report on what's happening there. I've been based in China since 2016, and since then, I've been trying to visit the region at least once a year to see how things have changed. This experience has enabled me to compare the changes taking place in the region from year to year. The most significant changes were evident in 2016, 2017, and 2018. By 2017, it was already quite challenging, but it was still possible to travel without feeling like you were being followed everywhere. However, that is no longer the case. There are police officers everywhere you look, and it's impossible not to be followed.

How did you and your team navigate the ethical concerns surrounding the publication of this sensitive and potentially dangerous information?

Our primary concern was that the documents we had obtained were classified, and we were unsure of how the authorities in China would react if I were to possess this material within China. Therefore, one of the first things we did was to fly out of the country and download the documents. Once I had landed in Frankfurt and was on my way to Berlin by train, I began to read the material and look at the photos. It was only then that I began to grasp the significance of what we had obtained.

We had several ethical concerns, one of which was that we did not have the consent of the people in the photos. Therefore, we decided to blur their faces, unlike the BBC. However, our most significant concern was to be sure that the material was authentic. We spent most of our time verifying the authenticity of the documents, forensically examining the photos to ensure that they had not been manipulated. We even paid a company to fly a satellite over the camps to get a fresh image from where we thought the camps might have been.

As someone who is computer-savvy, I was mainly responsible for tracking down relatives of people in the picture. I flew to Amsterdam to meet with them. These conversations were often disturbing. I had to inform an 80-year-old that their son had been sentenced to 11 years in prison. I had to tell a husband that his wife had been sentenced to 16 years. It was not easy to have these conversations.

In light of the international attention that the story has received, what do you hope will be the impact on human rights issues in China and the world in general?

The Xinjiang Police files have brought more awareness to the crime against humanity being perpetrated by the Chinese government. My hope for the future is that there will be more scrutiny of China's actions in East Turkistan, and that the international community will take action to hold China accountable for its actions. The situation in East Turkistan is quite grim, and I fear that it will only get

worse if no action is taken.

What term would you use to describe what's happening to the Uyghur people in China?

Personally, I would describe it as cultural genocide or a crime against humanity. The situation in East Turkistan is not like the mass murders in Rwanda. It's more like a slow erasure of the Uyghur culture, which is deeply concerning. It's also a crime to arbitrarily detain millions of people for an extended period, as is happening in East Turkistan, especially when the charges are often based on flimsy pretexts such as praying, growing beards, or refusing to drink alcohol.

There are a few other Muslim minorities in China, such as the Kazakhs and Tatars, but the Uyghurs are the largest. Interestingly, if a Han Chinese person converts to

Islam, they become a Hui Chinese. This is different from the Uyghurs who are considered a separate ethnic group. The Hui Chinese are generally integrated into Chinese society and are not targeted in the same way as the Uyghurs.

Do you think the situation in East Turkistan is related to the amount of resources the region has?

Yes, that's certainly one of the reasons why East Turkistan is so strategically important. Most of China's natural resources are located in that region, including nuclear test grounds. It's also of strategic importance to China for other reasons.

Do you think the Chinese government does similar things in other parts of the country?

Yes, the Chinese government has also



cracked down in Tibet and Mongolia, but not to the same extent as in East Turkistan. The grip is felt throughout the country, but it's particularly tight in East Turkistan because China wants to make sure it doesn't become a dangerous region like Afghanistan.

So you're saying that there is a perception among Chinese that East Turkistan is a scary and dangerous place?

Yes, that's been the narrative put out by the government. There have been some riots and terrorist attacks in the past, but the propaganda says these were fueled by separatism and religion. The real reason is social inequality. Uyghurs are Chinese

citizens, but they're treated like second-class citizens because they look different and have Uyghur names. They can't get jobs in other parts of China, so there's a high degree of social frustration. This has been erupting in small-scale incidents.

Once the regime has decided to handle a problem in a certain way, it's difficult to change course. In 2016, a party secretary was appointed to handle the issue in East Turkistan. He hired a lot of police and started the "re-education camps". He had the backing of Xi Jinping, who told him to solve the problem at all costs. Even if it doesn't make sense, the government wants to make sure it looks like they're doing something.

US SENATE PROBES ALLEGED CHINESE FORCED LABOR IN AUTO SUPPLY CHAIN

The Senate Finance Committee is investigating U.S. and foreign auto manufacturers and suppliers for potential links to forced labor practices in East Turkistan, where Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities are allegedly being coerced into working in factories.

The investigation is taking place amid a broader U.S. crackdown on goods originating from the northwestern Chinese region. Under the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act that Congress passed last year, goods made in East Turkistan cannot be imported to the United States unless importers prove that they are not

made using forced labor.

The automotive supply chain came under increased scrutiny in December, when the U.K.-based Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice issued a report that found links between Chinese companies operating in East Turkistan

and automakers that import parts from them.

Senator Ron Wyden, chairman of the chamber's Finance Committee, wrote to automakers and suppliers last week, telling them that the early stages of the investigation showed that automakers are heavily dependent on their direct suppliers to ensure that their supply chains are free from forced labor.

He said investigators have serious questions about whether the companies are even able to ensure their sub-suppliers in China do not rely on forced labor, partly because of the complexity of the supply chain. But he said that is no excuse.

"This complexity cannot cause the United States to compromise its fundamental commitment to upholding human rights and U.S. law," Wyden wrote.

Letters asking how Chinese supply chains are overseen went to companies including Ford, Honda, General Motors, Mercedes-Benz, Toyota, Tesla and Volkswagen,

as well as numerous major auto supply companies. The companies have until April 11 to reply, but American Honda Motor Co. Inc and Volkswagen Group of America both responded to VOA's inquiries, as did four other auto suppliers.

Willing to address issues

The companies that responded said they are committed to adhering to U.N. Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and ensuring that their products are not produced with forced labor. They also emphasized their willingness to work with policymakers to address these issues.

Katie Deel, a spokesperson at Volkswagen Group of America, emphasized the company's "zero tolerance" policy for forced and child labor in its business.

"The company takes its responsibility for human rights very seriously in all regions of the world, including China, adhering closely to the U.N. Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights," Deel told VOA.



Chris Abbruzzese, spokesperson at Honda, stated that the company expects its suppliers to follow its global Supplier Sustainability Guidelines, which include the requirements with respect to labor. “As with other inquiries from Capitol Hill, Honda will work with policymakers on these important issues,” Abbruzzese said.

Alissa Cleland, a spokesperson for auto supplier Robert Bosch GmbH, confirmed the company had been contacted by the committee but said it does not manufacture or acquire materials from direct suppliers in East Turkistan.

“Bosch is committed to ensuring that its products are not produced wholly or in part by forced labor,” Cleland said. “In our ‘Basic principles of social responsibility at Bosch,’ Bosch affirms these commitments and specifically rejects forced labor of any kind.”

Spokespersons for auto suppliers DENSO Corporation, Stellantis N.V., ZF Friedrichshafen AG and Continental North America all said they took the issue of forced labor seriously and would respond to the Senate committee’s request.

Chinese denials

Beijing officially denies allegations of forced labor in East Turkistan and says its labor programs are poverty alleviation measures aimed at helping ethnic minorities.

Washington says China is committing acts of genocide against the Uyghur people, including forced sterilization of women,

forced labor, torture, and the arbitrary detention of more than 1 million Uyghurs and other religious minorities in state-run internment camps and prisons.

The Chinese government also has been accused of forcing individuals to participate in government-sponsored labor programs, where they are not afforded the freedom to choose whether to work.

When asked about the claims, a spokesperson for China’s embassy in Washington said the accusations were false and questioned the motives of those making them.

“The claims of ‘forced labor’ and ‘forced sterilization’ by the Chinese government in East Turkistan are a smear on China’s ethnic policies and on East Turkistan’s achievements in development,” wrote Liu Pengyu in an email to VOA.

“The attempt by some anti-China forces and organizations to politicize human rights issues under the pretext of East Turkistan-related issues goes against people’s shared aspiration. The attempt to contain China under the pretext of Xinjiang-related issues is doomed to fail.

As evidence, you can look at a video titled “Jiangsu Food Company recruits 500 Uyghurs to Promote Positive Energy and Help Farmers”: “Hired by Jiangsu Food Company, Uyghur Jiangwai Food Co., Ltd. recruits 500 Uyghurs. Master plan: the first batch of fifty people. The second batch of hundred people.”



HOLDING OUT HOPE FOR A ‘SPRING’ FREE FROM CHINA’S REPRESSION

A poignant collection of Uyghur poems and short stories is published online.

By Nuriman Abdureshid for RFA Uyghur
2023.04.08

While spring has arrived in the Northern Hemisphere, Uyghurs in East Turkistan are still waiting for their spring to arrive, when they will be delivered from the repression of China’s government.

That’s the main sentiment expressed in

a new online collection of 15 poems and short stories by writers with connections to East Turkistan, Uyghurs’ preferred name for Xinjiang.

The Asian American Writers’ Workshop released “Spring Will Come: Writings from East Turkistan” on March 20, the eve of the Nowruz Festival, when Uyghurs and

other Turkic Muslims in East Turkistan celebrate the end of an old year and the beginning of a new one on the day of the vernal equinox, which usually takes place on March 21.

The writings reflect the impacts of colonialism, lessons learned from past failures, and warnings for the future. They also deal with spiritual resistance, determination, adherence to one's goals, and hope for freedom.

"[T]hrough the title 'Spring Will Come,' we express our desire and belief that we cannot live in cruel winter forever and that spring will come to our land eventually," said Munawwar Abdulla, a researcher at Harvard University who translated some of the contributions.

The "cruel winter" she refers to is China's repression of Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities in East Turkistan since 2017. At that time, authorities began detaining Uyghurs in "re-education" camps where they were forced to learn Mandarin Chinese and sometimes subjected to torture, sexual assaults and forced labor.

Despite evidence and witness testimony about the abuse, Beijing has vehemently maintained that the camps were vocation training centers to prevent religious extremism and terrorism in the restive region.

"Spring is the message of hope, resistance, resilience, and all good stuff." Abdulla said.

When will winter be over?

The collection begins with famous Uyghur

poet Abdurehim Ötkür's poem "Calling Out for Spring," the first stanza of which reads:

When will this bitter winter be over?

I call out for Spring with my every breath.

Like a lion roaring in pain in the night,

I cry out for Spring to arrive.

The publication comes as calls mount for the international community to take concrete measure to hold China accountable for what the United States government and several Western parliaments have said amount to genocide and crimes against humanity.

The works also serve as a refutation of the Chinese government's efforts to wipe out Uyghur culture, language and religion in an effort to Sinicize the region.

Amid the crackdown in recent years, authorities have detained in the camps and in prisons Uyghur intellectuals, including writers and artists, prominent business people, notable sports figures, Islamic clergymen and academics.

"When more people in the world recognize that the Uyghur people have become genocide victims, it is important to let the world know that Uyghur people are a civilized people with a unique culture," said Rahima Mahmut, a UK-based artist who also translated some of the pieces in the collection.

"They have writers, poets, artists, and talented people in every field," she told Radio Free Asia. "China has portrayed Uyghurs as uneducated, uncivilized

people who must be ‘re-educated.’ They have been making such efforts to paint Uyghurs in a negative light for many years. That is the main purpose of publishing this collection.”

Voices of the diaspora

The collection includes poems written in the 1940s in East Turkistan and ones written in English by diaspora Uyghurs as late as last year, said Mahmut, who

also serves as UK director for the World Uyghur Congress, a Uyghur rights group. “It manifests the connection diaspora Uyghurs have with their homeland,” she said.

The poem “My Plea” by Ilminur, known among diaspora Uyghurs as Efvan, is based on the 2017 crackdown in which her relatives were caught up. The first stanza reads:



Oh, Heavenly Mountains,
Behind you are corpses,
Before you is troubled silence.
How many rivers are flowing deep red
Within your valleys?
Oh, rebellious savage wolves,
Will your howl save the world?

Chinese authorities took Ilminur's parents to the camps and sentenced other relatives to 10-to 18-year prison terms, she said.

"These events impacted me deeply, and I wrote this poem hoping that our land under the heavenly mountain will be free," Ilminur told RFA.

Ilminur, who illustrates Uyghur children's books and magazines in the diaspora, provided bright sketches for the collection of works that evokes a sense of home and hope.

Her favorite drawing depicts three Uyghur women making round flatbread, or naan, by hand and placing it in an oven. The drawing accompanies Abdushukur Muhammet's poem "The Road Home."

"I feel good whenever I see this picture because I immediately think of my home and mother, Ilminur said. "Any sensible person will remember his mother, his home, when he sees it and feel the warmth."

'Light in the darkness'

Mahmut, the UK-based artist, said she was particularly moved by Ilminur's poem and Abdurrahim Imin's poem, "The Beloved

Will Come."

Efvan's poem "depicted the reality that our people are suffering tremendously, and the world turned deaf," said Mahmut.

Imin's poem, meanwhile, expresses hope that despite hardship and oppression, there must come a beautiful time when Uyghurs will be free.

"That poem gives our readers hope and tells them there is a light in the darkness, and we will get our liberty one day, and we can be free," Mahmut said.

Mahmut and Abudulla were involved in the project from start to finish, collecting writings, translating them to English, and editing them after the Asian American Writers' Workshop first contacted them about the compilation in June 2022.

Other works in the collection are "If Needed" by Muyesser Abdulehed, "Elegy for a Home Besieged" by Munawwar Abdulla, writer Zunun Qadiri's short story "The Edict," and contributions by Uyghur writers currently in prison in East Turkistan, including Abduqadir Jalalidin's "Boredom" and Perhat Tursun's "Guest."

The collection also includes pieces by two Kazakh writers.

"The global community must not just see our cries for help, our misery, and suffering," Mahmut said. "I hope they also feel by reading our poets' writings that we are courageous, resilient people."

Translated by RFA Uyghur. Edited by Roseanne Gerin and Malcolm Foster.



China, which has been committing genocide in East Turkistan, and Russia, which has invaded Ukraine,

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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 crimes against humanity and shine a light on the oppression in East Turkistan as well as exposing China's fake news propaganda.

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