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THE UIGHURS: A HISTORY OF PERSECUTION

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, HUMAN RIGHTS AND OVERSIGHT

OF THE

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THE UIGHURS: A HISTORY OF PERSECUTION

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10, 2009

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS,
HUMAN RIGHTS AND OVERSIGHT,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:11 a.m. in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Bill Delahunt (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. DELAHUNT. This hearing will come to order. I represent Plymouth, Massachusetts, which is America's hometown. Almost 400 years ago a small vessel called the Mayflower made landfall there and forever changed the history of the world. The men and women and children on that vessel were seeking religious liberty and freedom from persecution. Over the span of American history, many millions from many lands have followed those pilgrims to our shores and have sought refuge.

George Washington once wrote that he hoped America, and these are his words, might become a safe and agreeable asylum to the virtuous and persecuted part of mankind in whatever nation they might belong. For most of our history we have honored President Washington's hope for that part of mankind: The virtuous and the persecuted. That is why we are here today, to receive testimony concerning the Uighurs who are an ethnic Muslin minority from the northwest of China.

Twenty-two Uighurs were arrested in late 2001, and 17 are still detained at Guantanamo Bay, while five were previously resettled in Albania. It is our purpose to determine whether the Uighurs, previously or currently detained at Guantanamo are, to use Washington's words, part of the virtuous and persecuted, or, as one of our colleagues has seemed to conclude, are terrorists.

In other words, are the Uighurs freedom fighters worthy of our support and assistance, or are they a threat to our national security. Now, it is important to know that in June 2007 the House passed a resolution, H.R. 497, that acknowledged that China had, and was using, the war on terror to oppress the Uighurs. The resolution states that the Chinese Communists had, and this is the language of the resolution, manipulated the strategic objectives of the international war on terror to increase their cultural and religious oppression of the Muslim population residing in the Uighur Autonomous Region.

Now, let me repeat that, and please reflect. The Chinese Communists have manipulated the strategic objectives of the inter-

national war on terror to increase their cultural and religious oppression of the Uighur minority. What better way to achieve their objectives than to label the Uighurs as terrorists? What better way for the Chinese terrorists to achieve their goals? Now we hear the term terrorist applied to the 22 Uighur men who either are or are currently detained at Guantanamo Bay.

My question and my concern is this: Have some of us been duped by the Communist Chinese regime? Well, today we begin an effort to find answers to that and many other questions. We will undertake a thorough effort to find out the truth because we are the Subcommittee on Oversight and we take that responsibility seriously. This committee also has within its jurisdiction the responsibility to review human rights conditions worldwide.

I would submit that the American concept of due process is also a human right and it would appear that no due process has been afforded the Uighurs at Guantanamo until recently. It should be noted for the record that the Bush administration concluded that those that are currently there, those 17 Uighurs, were not a threat to the United States. That is the previous administration. A Federal Court ordered these Uighurs released in a seminal opinion finding the men to be nonenemy combatants and not a risk to the United States' national security; yet, some would seem to deny these men redress and continue to detain them if no other country would accept them. That was their position.

We even had a former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mr. Gingrich, who said we should send them back to China. I would submit that that would be an act that would undoubtedly violate our domestic laws and treaty obligations against the convention against torture because it is indisputable that the Uighurs have been a persecuted minority in China and if they were returned there would have undoubtedly faced torture and possibly death. That would be a stain on our national honor, particularly in the light of those words of George Washington.

Well, as I indicated, today is the first in a series of hearings we plan to hold in which we will make an effort to find out what is true and learn more about the treatment of the Uighurs in China and the circumstances surrounding their arrival and their detention at Guantanamo. Now, there have been some reports today, unconfirmed, that the Uighurs may be resettled, all 17, in the nation of Palau. Maybe their President, Johnson Toribiong, maybe he read those words of George Washington and is giving refuge for the virtuous and the persecuted. We will make an effort to find out.

As I said, we plan to pursue this because we should learn whatever lessons there are from the detention and the treatment of the Uighurs. It is important for us as we move forward because the President has announced that he intends to close Guantanamo. What we want to do is ensure fairness and revealing the truth rather than opinion to our colleagues and to the American people.

Well, as to the treatment of the Uighurs in China, which is what we are going to do here today, our colleague Chris Smith eloquently stated before, and I am quoting from him, that "the list of serious human rights abuses committed by the Chinese Government is long. It includes the persuasive systematic exploitation of

women and the murder of their children through forced abortion as part of its coercive one child per couple policy."

Against the Uighurs it is used as a means of genocide of trying to destroy an entire race and ethnic group of people because of who they are. The imprisonment of democratic dissidents and religious believers remain a pervasive problem in China. Congressman Smith went on to say that if a Uighur or anyone is arrested, the way they get a conviction is that they torture you. Eventually, you sign on the bottom line and admit your so-called crimes.

Again, there is abuse, after abuse, after abuse, and the Uighurs bear the brunt of it. Imagine sending them back to China as a solution to the conundrum in which we find ourselves today. The 2008 human rights report published by our own Department of State confirms what Congressman Smith and others have publicly stated. I am going to read just a few excerpts for the record from that report.

During the year the Chinese Government increased its severe cultural and religious persecution of the ethnic minorities in the Tibetan areas and in the Uighur Autonomous Region. Executions of Uighurs, whom authorities accused of separatism, but which some observers claim were politically motivated, were reported during prior reporting periods. Regulations restricting Muslims' religious activity, teaching in placing of worship, continued to be implemented forcibly in the Uighur Autonomous Region.

Measures to tighten control over religion in the Uighur Autonomous Region included increasing surveillance of mosques, religious leaders and practitioners, detaining and arresting persons engaged in unauthorized religious activities. The government in the Uighur Autonomous Region took measures to dilute expressions of Uighur identity, including measures to reduce education in ethnic minority languages.

During the year, authorities increased repression in the Uighur Autonomous Region and targeted the region's ethnic Uighur population. The Chinese Government continued to repress Uighurs expressing peaceful political dissent and independent Muslim religious leaders often citing counterterrorism as the reason for taking action. The excuse of terrorism to suppress and oppress a religious minority. Here we are today. Many Americans are just discovering that there is a group of people who are called the Uighurs, and today we will learn something about them.

Although Muslim, we will learn that the Uighur men and women are not Jihadees but are a peace loving people who seek religious liberty and are proponents of democracy. We will learn about their treatment in Communist China and their likely fade if they should be sent back to China. Well, now let me turn to my friend and colleague, the ranking member of this Subcommittee on Oversight and Human Rights, the gentleman from California, Dana Rohrabacher.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Some people might be surprised to see, Mr. Chairman, that I am being challenged as being who is the most anti-Communist on this panel. I would note that last weekend I was out in the ocean doing what I love to do, which is surfing at sunset, the beautiful horizon there to the west, and I thought of the words that Ronald Reagan once told me and has repeated many

times, and I don't want to compete with you, Mr. Chairman, in terms of talking about your beautiful coastline, but Ronald Reagan did mention that had the pilgrims landed in California instead of on Plymouth Rock, the east coast would still be uninhabited.

I appreciate your remarks today. We have so much to be grateful for. I realize when I am sitting there on my surfboard and I am looking into the west and looking into the sunset that there are people who live on the other side of that lake and we are grateful for the freedom that we have here but we must remain in solidarity with human beings who share our values, whether here, or there, or there. The fact is that America is a dream, as you pointed out, of a place where we identify with those people throughout the world who are struggling for their freedom and their liberty.

If we ever lose that, we have lost the essence of what America was supposed to be all about. I have always felt that that is what my particular party was all about, and I am more than disturbed that some of my fellow Republicans have been defending the Guantanamo Bay prisoner situation with the worst possible arguments by focusing on the potential release of 17 Uighurs rather than emphasizing that Guantanamo has been a perfect location to imprison blood thirsty murderers who would murder our families, terrorists.

The line of attack on this effort, what I have seen, in terms of focusing on the release of the Uighurs when trying to discuss the Guantanamo issue has been a political attack, I would say a very despicable political attack, which is trying to frighten the American people at the expense of 17 helpless human beings. The facts are that the Uighurs are not enemy combatants and I happen to support, and have always supported, Guantanamo being used as a location for us to imprison terrorists who threaten to kill our families, who hate America.

Well, if you believe that, which I felt my fellow Republicans believed that, we should be the ones who are in the forefront of trying to make sure that when mistakes are made that they are admitted and corrected as soon as possible, otherwise, what kind of people are we if we don't? We know we are in a terrible fight with terrorists who have already slaughtered 3,000 of our fellow citizens.

When you fight those kind of battles and you have to have situations like Guantanamo, it behooves us to go out of our way and to be as, and to put as much energy as we can into ensuring that there aren't mistakes made so that the validity of our battle is underscored. As we say, the Uighurs are not enemy combatants, they are friends and admirers of the United States, as I have said in many occasions long before this. Their enemies are the dictators in Beijing who rule over the People's Republic of China and invaded, and now occupy, the Uighur country of east Turkistan.

The Bush administration that held the Uighurs in Guantanamo labeled them as terrorists to appease the Chinese dictatorship in a pathetic attempt to gain its support at the beginning of the war against Iraq and to assure its continued purchase of U.S. Treasuries. Many, if not all, the negative allegations against the Uighurs can be traced back to Chinese intelligence whose purpose is to snuff out an independence movement that challenges the Communist bosses in Beijing.

No patriot, certainly no Republican, should fall for this manipulation which has us doing Beijing's bidding. It is a travesty. Former Speaker Newt Gingrich, has been in the forefront of defending this miscarriage of justice, and unfortunately, at the service of the Communist Party dictatorship of China. As early as 2003 for 10, and continuing through 2008 for others, the United States military concluded that the Uighurs should be released since early as 2003.

These determinations were predicated on finding that each Uighur does not pose a continuing threat to the United States or its allies in our ongoing conflict with al-Qaeda. Two Judges on the D.C. Federal Panel that reviewed the Uighurs' case, two of them were appointed by Republicans. The Court found that the Uighurs had been turned in by Pakistani villagers, not caught on the battlefield, and also acknowledged that no source document evidence was introduced to indicate that the Uighurs had actually joined the east Turkistan Islamic movement, that is ETIM, or that they had personally committed any hostile acts against the United States or its coalition partners.

Of course this is moot, however, because the Court also recognized that there was a failure to establish the ETIM as being associated with al-Qaeda or the Taliban and because of this found there was insufficient evidence to classify the Uighurs as enemy combatants. The Uighurs were also recommended for release because there is "substantial support" for the claim that the source of evidence against them was Communist China and that the Judges determined that the case "maintains that Chinese reporting on the subject of the Uighurs cannot be regarded as objective and offers substantial support for that proposition as well."

An FBI agent reported that "the Uighurs are moderate Muslims who occupy the east Turkistan, which was taken over by the Chinese and renamed Xinjiang," I guess this is how you pronounce it, "a province of China." The Uighurs were offered land in Afghanistan in order to gather themselves together in their personal opposition to Chinese oppression. Uighurs consider themselves to be fighting for democracy and they idolized the United States, and this is all from the FBI determination, "although the Uighurs are Muslim, their agenda did not appear to include Islamic radicalism."

Many conservatives knowledgeable about the facts have also come out in opposition to holding the Uighurs. I am very proud of these people, and I think that these people have been holding true to the values that at least my party is supposed to be about. It is unfortunate that some other political leaders in my party have not seemed to be so principled.

The list includes Mickey Edwards, president of the Aspen Institute, lecturer at the Woodrow Wilson School of Princeton University; Thomas B. Evans, a former Member of Congress and a former co-chairman of the Republican National Committee; Bruce Fein, former Associate Deputy/Associate Attorney General to Ronald Reagan; David Keaton, chairman of the American Conservative Union; William Sessions, former Director of the FBI and former Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas; John Whitehead, president of the Rutherford Institute; Laurence Wilkerson, former Chief of Staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell.

All of these my fellow Republicans who have been taking a principle stand rather than playing politics with the lives of these 17 Uighurs. An ongoing attempt to appease Communist China is behind the detention of the 17 Uighurs currently held in Guantanamo. By detaining the Uighurs, the United States is an accomplice to China's discrimination against the Uighur people and the illegal occupation of east Turkistan and we should all recognize this.

An FBI report noted that Communist Chinese agents were allowed into Guantanamo in 2002 to interrogate, torture and threaten these Uighurs even though the United States has condemned China's human rights abuses of the Uighurs.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Would the gentleman yield for a moment?

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I certainly will.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I ask the gentleman if he has a memory of the request that you and I made, myself, as chair of this subcommittee, and you, as the ranking member, of our Government, the executive branch, for you and myself to have access to the Uighur detainees. Do you have a memory of that?

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I certainly do.

Mr. DELAHUNT. While it would appear that Communist Chinese intelligence agents were granted access, the response to you and to me was deafening silence. I find that totally unacceptable and offensive.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. It is the type of, well, it is a comment on the current reality we live with that our Government feels so subservient to Communist Chinese bosses that their agents are able to interrogate people who are being held at an American military base in custody but that members of the United States Congress are not granted that same privilege.

Amnesty International has found that China "continues to brutally suppress any peaceful political, religious and cultural activities of Uighurs and enforce a birth control policy that compels minority Uighur women to undergo forced abortions and sterilization." How could we not see that by detaining these men we were only participants in China's hateful and discriminatory policies toward the Uighurs, China's attempt to suppress these people?

The Republican Party should not be in the business of supporting the Chinese Communist Party's self-serving vision of what is right and what is wrong. We Americans should stand for a different principle in this, we should stand above this, rather than momentary deals made with dictators. If any country should stand for principle, it should be ours because there is no hope in the world, not just for the Uighurs, but for anybody who believes in liberty and justice, unless we Americans hold firm to our standards and our principles.

Most important in this case, we need to be truthful. I happen to have always supported Guantanamo Bay as a prison and I have supported enhanced interrogation during a time when our country is at war with the radical Islamists who would murder our people, and did murder our people when they slaughtered 3,000 of our citizens on 9/11. I have three children at home, my neighbors have children. It is our job to protect the children and the lives of our people all over the United States of America.

If we hold that to be true, and we are committed to this war, and that Guantanamo, I believe, has been playing an important part of that, we must have the courage to admit our mistakes when we make mistakes. Whatever human endeavor is made by the United States or anyone else, mistakes will be made. If we don't admit our mistakes and we don't try to correct them, we are adding on to what was a mistake. We are then making it a sinful decision.

We need to admit a mistake was made when we held the Uighurs in the first place. They were sent to us to collect a bounty. That was the motive of people who sent them to us. We should have realized and been honest enough to realize this needs much further looking into than in a case where most of the people who are now being held in Guantanamo, if not all of them, most of the people being held there were not turned in for people with a bounty, but instead were picked up on the battlefield and had much evidence that they had actually come from other countries to join the al-Qaeda foreign legion and to basically serve as an army to attack the United States.

So with that said, Mr. Chairman, it is my honor to sit here with you and to try to bring to light the facts behind this case, this very murky episode, in the war against radical Islam. Again, let me just note while we move forward to try to do justice to the Uighurs and admit our mistakes, I do not believe that that means that we in some way in this war against radical Islam, which was declared on us, that we are in a morally inferior position.

We should be proud of the fact that we are protecting ourselves and trying to defend the world and the decent people of this world against this force, you know, that actually holds all of our values, whether religious freedom or how we treat women, that it holds them in contempt and would declare us their enemies. So with that said, let us get down and try to get the facts out and do our duty. That is what this is about. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Well, thank you, Dana, and never let it be said that you were not an individual of strong convictions and profound courage. We agree on very little. I would close Guantanamo, I am opposed to, I will use the euphemism, enhanced interrogation techniques, but one thing that I share with my friend, and he is my friend, is whatever the facts are we will go there, we will search for the truth. This particular episode of the Uighurs deserves the kind of transparency that the President has referred to.

Wherever these 17 men end up, and hopefully they are on their way to that island in the Pacific, which I understand has great surfing, Mr. Rohrabacher, whatever happens, it is important for us to learn from this. I have always respected anyone who can acknowledge mistakes and learn from those mistakes, and you clearly are an extraordinary example of that kind of individual. I have a lot of work to do with you, however, on some other issues, but we will discuss that in a private moment.

The vice chair of this subcommittee is Mr. Carnahan. If he wishes to make a statement.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member. Just briefly, you know, as we are working to reengage our allies and partners around the world it is important, I believe, that we work with all countries on human rights, and equality and reli-

gious freedom. Last week in Cairo, President Obama spoke about religious freedom. He said that freedom of religion is central to the ability of people to live together and that faith should bring us together.

I will be interested to hear what the witnesses have to say about how they support the Uighur people. Ms. Gaer, your organization's recent report was mentioned in the article in The Economist last week that suggested the U.S. needs to actively support religious freedom as part of our foreign policy. I would be very interested in hearing your views and to hear you expand about that. Again, just wanted to thank all the witnesses for being here today with regard to this important issue. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Thank you, Mr. Carnahan. The distinguished gentleman from New Jersey, we are joined by Mr. Payne. Does he wish to make a statement?

Mr. PAYNE. Well, I will be very brief. Let me just commend you for calling this hearing. I think that it is very important. It is amazing that we have such positive relations with the People's Republic of China, a country that says we will execute these people if they come home. We really ought to have higher standards. I agree with the chairman, too, that this so-called enhanced interrogation is wrong. If we bring ourselves down to where the worst of the world is, then we are simply wallowing in the gutter.

The sad part is that perhaps some of these Uighurs were enhancely interrogated. Innocent people should not be subjected to the brutality of torture; however, and now we are finding that they will be released, and so that is why it is wrong that our nation will debate whether, as Mr. Cheney did, should torture be done? He supported it whole-heartedly. That is not the purpose for this hearing; however, I am sure that some of these innocent people were brutalized, and so I can't understand how some of us can say we embrace it, it is right, it is the way to go, when innocent people are brutalized, and anyone is brutalized.

I just returned from an African country where a person was water boarded, and I have heard about it from time to time, but to hear him talk about how you are immersed under water and body hits so you have to take deep breaths as the water comes in. This is something that we did. It is absolutely wrong. I yield back. Thank you.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Thank you, Mr. Payne. I just want it to be clear. There would appear to be no allegations that I am aware of that the treatment of the Uighurs by the Americans implicated any enhanced interrogation techniques. Obviously, we will make that inquiry. However, what I am unaware of is how they were treated when those Communist Chinese intelligence agents were allowed access to those. There are some reports that there were not only interrogated, but intimidated and threatened in Guantanamo not by Americans, but by Communist Chinese intelligence agents.

Mr. Rohrabacher, we are going to make every effort to find the truth of that particular allegation as well. Now let me introduce an extremely distinguished panel of witnesses, and let me begin by introducing a remarkable woman, Ms. Kadeer. She has led an incredible life and is currently the democratic, that is a small "D," leader

of the Uighur people worldwide. She is the mother of 11 children and is a former laundress turned a successful businessperson.

She spent nearly 6 years in a Chinese prison for criticizing China's human rights violations and defending Uighur freedom. In 1999, Ms. Kadeer was arrested while on her way to meet a United States congressional delegation to discuss human rights issues. For her actions, she was sentenced to 8 years imprisonment in March 2000 following a secret trial. During her imprisonment, Ms. Kadeer witnessed the beating and torture of other prisoners and was forced to spend 2 year in solitary confinement.

Since arriving in the United States, Ms. Kadeer has actively campaigned for the rights of the Uighur people. She was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006, 2007 and 2008. In 2005, she founded the International Uighur Human Rights and Democracy Foundation here in Washington, D.C., which again works to promote human rights for Uighur children and women living in the autonomous region. In 2006, she became the President of the Uighur American Association and President of the World Uighur Congress, which represents the interests of the Uighur diaspora.

In retaliation for her advocacy, her children have been persecuted. In spring of 2006, three of her sons were detained and beaten and other family members, including her brother, her daughter and several grandchildren, were placed under house arrest. Currently, two of her sons are in a Communist Chinese prison for tax evasion in one case, and in the other, for instigating and engaging in secessionist activities.

President Bush recognized Ms. Kadeer in a speech he delivered in Czechoslovakia, in Prague, by stating, and these are his words, "Another dissident I will meet with here is Rebiya Kadeer of China whose sons have been jailed on what we believe is an act of retaliation for her human rights activities. The talent of men and women like Ms. Kadeer is the greatest resource for their nations, far more valuable than the weapons of their army or oil under their ground." Ms. Kadeer, it is an honor for all of us to have you here today and hear your story.

Next, we welcome Ms. Felice Gaer, chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. Ms. Gaer directs the Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights of the American Jewish Committee which conducts research in advocacy to strengthen international human rights protection in institutions. She is also the first American to serve as an independent expert on the U.N. Committee against Torture.

Nominated by the Clinton administration and renominated by the Bush administration, she has served on the committee since the year 2000, including as vice chair, general rapporteur, and as year round rapporteur on follow-up country conclusions. She is also a member on the Council of Foreign Relations and on the Advisory Committee of Human Rights Watch in Europe and central Asia, and is vice president of the International League on Human Rights.

She is also a graduate of Wellesley College which is right outside of Boston, Massachusetts, which is near Plymouth, Massachusetts, America's hometown, and she has advanced degrees from Columbia University in New York. Welcome.

I am also pleased to welcome Kara Abramson. She is an advocacy director at the Congressional Executive Commission on China where she focuses on ethnic minority rights and religious freedom in China. She received her bachelor's degree from Princeton and her J.D. degree from Harvard Law School where she focused on international human rights law. In addition, she has studied and researched the Chinese legal system as a Fulbright fellow in China, she has been published on numerous topics, including the Uighur Autonomous Region and Chinese legal education. Welcome to you, Ms. Abramson.

You share, and it is spelled the same way, my daughter's first name, who I just was notified is delivering my first grandchild as we speak, so I might be distracted during the course of this hearing.

Finally, I am also happy that my friend, Nury Turkel, can join us today. He is a Washington-based attorney whose practice focuses on commercial and regulatory measures, including antitrust issues, aviation matters and international agreements, among other things. In addition to his law practice, Nury has been, and continues to be, an active Uighur advocate and has testified not only before the United States Congress, but also spoken to the United States Military Academy, the National Defense University and Columbia University.

He holds both a law and master's degree from American University here in Washington. Nury, welcome. It is always good to see you. Let us proceed. I think what we should do is begin because it is such an honor to have you here, Ms. Kadeer, with your testimony. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF MRS. REBIYA KADEER, PRESIDENT, WORLD UYGHUR CONGRESS

Mrs. KADEER. Before I begin my testimony, Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank you and thank Congressman Rohrabacher for holding this very special hearing today. I know that if the Uighur people knew about how much you are well aware of the situation of the Uighur people, the suffering today, I know they would be so delighted that some Members of Congress in the United States, they actually understand our six decades suffering under Chinese Communist rule.

Before I begin my testimony, I would like to state on the record that the Uighur people, together with all the freedom people, are opposed to terrorism and violence because we know that the Uighur people are also victim of terrorism. Since I do not speak English, Uighur American Association Vice President, Alim Seytoff, will read my statement.

[The following testimony was delivered through an interpreter.]

Mrs. KADEER. Thank you for inviting me to speak on the persecution of the Uighur people by the Government of the People's Republic of China. Such interest in the plight of the Uighur people at the highest levels of the U.S. Government shines a light on the darkest corners of the Chinese Government repression and gives hope to millions of the Uighur people across the world. This year, China will enter its 60th year under the rule of the Chinese Communist Party.

The pace of economic develop in the PRC since the inception of the reform era in the late 1970s has earned the CCP the admiration of many observers. However, in the rush to praise modern China, a 60-year history of political repression and the present day policy of minority persecution has been obscured. The Uighur people of east Turkistan have long been victims of CCP's 60 year authoritarian rule.

In the years since the CCP gained control of east Turkistan in 1949 and before Deng Xiaoping launched his era of economic reforms, Uighurs were subjects to a number of destructive Communist-led campaigns and movements. From the purges of east Turkistan nationalists in the anti rights campaign of the late 1950s to the starvation, exile and destruction of the Cultural Revolution between 1966 until 1967, Uighurs, along with millions of other victims, were persecuted by the CCP.

However, Uighurs were also subjected to special campaigns specifically direct at them so as to dilute their unique ethnic identity. In early 1960s, the CCP administration investigated a forced resettlement policy with the aims of dispersing concentrations of Uighurs and of isolating Uighurs from their communities. In 1961, my family fell victim to this policy. We were forced to leave our home and to relocate far from our friends and relations.

As is apparent, documenting the history of the Uighur persecution by the Chinese authorities is a long and a detailed undertaking which is full of personal stories, most likely lost due to the silencing of Uighur descent throughout the years. However, in this testimony I would like to focus on the present day persecution of the Uighurs and use this opportunity to outline the suffering of the Uighur people which is happening as we convene here now.

At this point in history, the Uighurs of east Turkistan face a critical challenge to their very existence as a unique people. East Turkistan sits on valuable natural resources, namely oil, natural gas, and is strategically important due to its proximity to Russia, south Asia and central Asia. The Chinese Government's thirst for energy to drive its economy and its growing dominance in global affairs has made the Uighur presence in east Turkistan an inconvenience.

In order to resolve this, the Chinese Government is undertaking methodical long and short term measures. These measures impact every area of Uighur society, including its politics, economics and culture. The message these measure spell out is clear: Uighurs must assimilate or face extinction. Wang Lequan, the Xinjiang party's secretary, has called the subjugation of the Uighur people a life and a death struggle. Since 9/11, the Chinese Government has used our Islamic faith against us and labeled the Uighurs as terrorists to justify crackdowns and security sweeps as part of the global war on terror.

The Chinese authorities have also heavily promote the notion that a coordinated and organized Uighur terror network exists under the umbrella of an organization called the East Turkistan Islamic Movement, or something called Turkistan Islamic Party. It is not certain who are the actual members of ETIM or TIP. Independent observers are not even sure if ETIM actually exists. With regard to TIP, dots exist as to whether it is indeed a group oper-

ated by some Uighurs or a shadow terror organization created by the PRC authorities to demonize Uighur people's peaceful struggle against Chinese repression.

It is in the national interest of China to have a radicalized Uighur group, such as ETIM or TIP, to justify the severe repression it carries out against the Uighur people, especially after 9/11. Using the terror threat as a pretext in the pre-Olympics period, the Chinese authorities were able to detain, arrest and even execute Uighurs for their peaceful opposition to the Chinese rule in east Turkistan. Because of time I will skip some of the details, and I am going to come back to my personal story.

Traveling all over my homeland as a businesswoman and a philanthropist I witnessed the slow eradication of my people's religion, language and identity. I tried to help my people out of poverty, give opportunities to marginalized Uighurs and speak out against the injustices. For this, I paid a heavy price. I was once a political prisoner of the Chinese Government. I spent nearly 5 years in inhumane conditions for the price of my advocacy on behalf of the Uighur people in prison.

In prison, I saw for myself torture, cruelty and act on my people by the Chinese authorities. Even in exile and among free people in the United States I am aware that I am subject to harassment from Chinese authorities, including surveillance of my activities at work and even at home. However, it is my two sons, Alim and Ablikim, who currently pay a greater price. Today, they suffer in a Chinese prison convicted on false and politically motivated charges.

Alim was detained on May 30, 2006, and severely beaten by Chinese police on June 1, 2006. He was arraigned on Monday, June 10, 2006, on charges of attempting to split the state. On June 13, 2006, he was charged with tax evasion as a result of an investigation into the family business. He has reportedly been tortured and subject to physical abuse while in detention. He was reported to have confessed on or around July 1, 2006 to criminal and political charges against him as a direct consequence of being tortured by the Chinese authorities.

In November 2006, Alim was sentenced to 7 years in prison and was fined US$62,500 on charges of tax evasion. My second son, Ablikim, was detained on May 30, 2006, as well. He also was severely beaten by Chinese police on June 1, and he was later hospitalized in June following police beating and has repeatedly been tortured and subject to severe medical neglect during his detention and subsequent imprisonment. He was also severely beaten, especially in his heart part, so he suffers heart problems today as a result of torture in Chinese prison.

Ablikim was sentenced to 9 years in prison on charges of secessionism in April 2007. On May 31 this year, the Chinese authorities allowed some of my children to separately visit Alim and Ablikim. Ablikim, who has heart problems as I indicated, didn't say much during the visit. He did point to his heart, trying to show that his heart problem is getting worse. He looked extremely pale and very skinny. Alim, the other son, say that he had to do heavy prison labor and suffered tremendously as a result of poor quality of prison food.

He, too, looked quite skinny. Prison authorities only allowed family members to give Alim 100 Chinese Yen, which is equivalent to US$15, monthly to pay for his food. Alim also state that he suffers severe stomach problems for which the authorities did not provide any kind of medical care. The Uighur people had hoped that the Chinese Government would honor its pre-Olympic promises to the international community for a greater respect for human rights.

Instead, Uighurs have seen an intensification of the long-term persecution it has suffered at the hands of the PRC authorities. This is a critical time for the Uighur people, so, in conclusion, I will offer in the context of the long-standing support shown by the United States to the Uighur people five recommendations to policy makers on addressing the systemic and egregious human rights abuses that prevail in east Turkistan.

I ask that the committee encourage the establishment of independent body to investigate China's systematic human rights violations of the Uighur people and evaluate the consequences of China's six decade long repressive policies in east Turkistan. Second, I ask that the committee work with the U.S. State Department to establish a consulate in Urumqi, the regional capital, to monitor and document the deteriorating human rights situation in the region.

Third, I would like to ask that the U.S. Embassy in Beijing send officials to visit my children in prison and find out their situation there. Fourth, to enhance dialogue between Han Chinese, the Uighurs and Tibetans. I ask that radio free Asia and voice of America add to their Mandarin services a half-hour program each week on issues related to east Turkistan and Tibet. In this way, Mandarin speakers are able to access information from a different perspective on these two regions.

Lastly, I ask that the committee work with the State Department again to establish a special envoy on Uighur affairs to oversee at a senior level the evaluation of Chinese Government's performance on improving human rights conditions in east Turkistan and a launch of the dialogue on a solution to the legitimate grievances and aspirations of the Uighur people. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mrs. Kadeer follows:]

The Uyghurs: A History of Persecution

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight

Wednesday, June 10, 2009

Testimony by Ms. Rebyia Kadeer

Before I begin my testimony, I would like to thank the members of the committee for holding this important hearing and for inviting me to speak on the persecution of the Uyghur people by the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Such interest in the plight of the Uyghur people at the highest levels of the U.S. government shines a light on the darkest corners of Chinese government repression and gives hope to millions of Uyghurs across the world.

This year, China will enter its sixtieth year under the rule of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The pace of economic development in the PRC since the inception of the reform era in the late seventies has earned the CCP the admiration of many observers. However, in the rush to praise modern China, a sixty year history of political repression and a present-day policy of minority persecution has been obscured.

The Uyghur people of East Turkestan, an area known by the Chinese authorities as Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, have long been victims of the CCP's sixty-year authoritarian rule. In the years since the CCP gained control of East Turkestan in 1949 and before Deng Xiaoping launched his era of economic reforms, Uyghurs were subjected to a number of destructive Communist-led campaigns and movements.

From the purges of East Turkestan nationalists in the Anti-Rightist Campaign of the late fifties, to the starvation, exile and destruction of the Cultural Revolution between 1966 and 1976, Uyghurs, along with millions of other victims, were persecuted by the CCP. However, Uyghurs were also subjected to special campaigns specifically directed at them so as to dilute their distinct identity. In the early sixties, the CCP administration instigated a forced resettlement policy with the aims of dispersing concentrations of Uyghurs and of

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isolating Uyghurs from their communities. In 1961, my family fell victim to this policy. We were forced to leave our home and to relocate far from our friends and our relations.

As is apparent, documenting the history of Uyghur persecution by the Chinese authorities is a long and detailed undertaking, which is full of personal stories most likely lost due to the silencing of Uyghur dissent throughout the years. However in this testimony, I would like to focus on the present day persecution of Uyghurs and use this opportunity to outline the suffering of the Uyghur people, which is happening as we convene here now.

At this point in history, the Uyghurs in East Turkestan face a critical challenge to their very existence as a people. East Turkestan sits on valuable natural resources, namely oil, and is strategically important due to its proximity to Russia, South Asia and Central Asia. The Chinese government's thirst for energy to drive its economy and its growing dominance in global affairs has made the Uyghur presence in East Turkestan an inconvenience. In order to resolve this, the Chinese government is undertaking methodical long and short term measures. These measures impact every area of Uyghur society, including its politics, economics, and culture. The message these measures spell out is clear. Uyghurs must assimilate or face extinction.

Wang Lequan, the "Xinjiang" Communist Party Secretary has called the subjugation of the Uyghur people a "life and death" struggle. Since 9/11, the Chinese government has used our Islamic faith against us and labeled Uyghurs as terrorists to justify crackdowns and security sweeps as part of the "war on terror". The Chinese authorities have also heavily promoted the notion that a coordinated and organized Uyghur terror network exists under the umbrella of an organization called the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) or the Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP)

It is not certain who are the actual members of ETIM or TIP. Independent observers are not even sure if ETIM actually exists. With regard to TIP, doubts exist on whether it is indeed a group operated by some religious Uyghurs or a shadow terror organization created by the PRC authorities to demonize the Uyghur people's peaceful struggle against Chinese repression. It is in the national interest of China to have a radicalized Uyghur group, such as ETIM or TIP, to justify the severe persecution it carries out against the Uyghur people.

Using the terror threat as a pretext, in the pre-Olympics period (from January 2008 to July 2008), the Chinese authorities launched a crackdown in which 25 Uyghurs were killed in alleged "terror raids", 76 Uyghurs were convicted on terror-related charges – 20 of them sentenced to death, and 2 Uyghur "terrorists" were executed at a mass sentencing rally.

On January 4, 2009, The Procuratorial Daily reported that nearly 1,300 people were arrested in East Turkestan on state security crimes in 2008, marking a steep increase over previous years. Of the nearly 1,300 arrests made, 1,154 were formally charged and faced trials or administrative punishment. According to the People's Republic of China's

national statistics bureau, only 742 people were arrested on state security crimes throughout the entire country in 2007, and 619 of these were indicted.

On December 17, 2008 Abdurahman Azat and Kurbanjan Hemit were sentenced by the Intermediate People's Court of Kashgar to death for "intentional homicide and illegally producing guns, ammunition and explosives". Abdurahman Azat and Kurbanjan Hemit had been detained for allegedly carrying out an August 4, 2008 attack in Kashgar in which sixteen armed police were killed. Both men were executed on April 9, 2009 at an unknown location after the announcement of their impending execution was read out in front of 4,000 officials and Kashgar residents in a local stadium. According to local sources, Hemit appeared to have been severely beaten while in custody.

What is disturbing about terror allegations in East Turkestan is the astonishing lack of evidence accompanying the allegations, arrests and death sentences. The case against Abdurahman Azat and Kurbanjan Hemit is particularly alarming as eyewitness evidence from tourist bystanders contradicts the official version of events. We have no idea if this evidence was considered by Chinese judicial authorities as the trial, if there ever was one, was carried out behind closed doors.

Detention, torture and execution represent the short-term measures the Chinese government uses to silence Uyghur dissent. In addition, The Chinese government is committing economic, social and cultural human rights abuses to undermine Uyghur society long-term.

The United Nations documents lower incomes and higher poverty for Uyghurs compared to Han Chinese in East Turkestan. Job opportunities in the public and private sectors are few for the young and talented Uyghurs graduating from university.

A new policy recruits young Uyghur women from majority Uyghur areas of East Turkestan and transfers them to work in factories in urban areas of east China. Under the policy, thousands of Uyghur women have been removed from their families and placed into substandard working conditions thousands of miles from their homes.

Already, hundreds of thousands of young Uyghur women have been transferred from East Turkestan into Beijing, Tianjin, Jiangsu, Qingdao, Shandong, Zhejiang, and other locations. There were 240,000 from the Kashgar Region to China's eastern provinces in 2006. The eventual goal of this policy, as part of the 11th Five Year Plan of the Chinese government, is to transfer some 400,000 young Uyghur women to China's eastern provinces.

The mass in-migration of Han Chinese settlers and the transfer of young Uyghur women to east China has changed the demography of East Turkestan. Today, Uyghurs are a minority in their own land.

This long-term economic strategy is accompanied by cultural human rights abuses. In East Turkestan, China is actively promoting the "Sinification" of Uyghurs, whereby

linguistic, and religious aspects of Uyghur culture are outlawed, banned, or otherwise discouraged.

Uyghurs are not permitted to undertake Hajj, unless it is with an expensive official tour, in which applicants are carefully vetted for their "obedience to the law". Confiscations of passports, to the point where very few Uyghurs have passports, ensures adherence to the 'official tours only' policy.

In addition, students and government employees are not permitted to fast during Ramadan or attend mosques in general. Restaurants are also forced to open during fasting hours in the month of Ramadan. These repressive policies makes it very difficult for Uyghurs to perform the five pillars of the Islamic faith.

Furthermore, Chinese authorities are implementing a monolingual Chinese language education system among Uyghurs in East Turkestan that undermines the linguistic basis of Uyghur culture. Since the mid-1980's China's government has moved in stages towards making Chinese the only language of instruction in East Turkestan's schools. Over the past five years, government efforts at eliminating Uyghur language schools have accelerated dramatically as compulsory Chinese language education has been expanded at every educational level and every township in East Turkestan.

Traveling all over my homeland as a businesswoman and philanthropist, I witnessed the slow eradication of my people's religion, language and identity. I tried to help my people out of poverty, give opportunities to marginalized Uyghurs and speak out against the injustices. For this I paid a price.

I was once a political prisoner of the Chinese government. I spent over five years in inhumane conditions for the price of my advocacy on behalf of the Uyghur people. In prison I saw for myself the torture and cruelty enacted on my people by the Chinese authorities. Even in exile and among free people in the United States, I am subjected to harassment from Chinese authorities, including surveillance of my activities at work and at home.

However, it is my two sons Alim and Ablikim who currently pay a greater price. Today they suffer in a Chinese prison, convicted on false and politically motivated charges. Prior to my 2007 meeting with President Bush in Prague, the President said "[a]nother dissident I will meet here is Rebiya Kadeer of China, whose sons have been jailed in what we believe is an act of retaliation for her human rights activities".

Alim was detained on May 30, 2006 and severely beaten by police on June 1, 2006. He was arraigned on Monday, July 10, 2006 on charges of tax evasion and "attempting to split the state". On June 13, 2006, he was charged with tax evasion as a result of an investigation into the family business. He has reportedly been tortured and subjected to physical abuse while in detention. He was reported to have 'confessed' on or around July 1, 2006 to criminal and political charges against him as a direct consequence of being

tortured. In November 2006, Alim was sentenced to seven years in prison and fined 62,500 USD on charges of tax evasion.

Ablikim was detained on May 30, 2006. He also was severely beaten by police on June 1, 2006. Ablikim was hospitalized in early June following the police beating, and has reportedly been tortured and subjected to severe medical neglect during his detention and subsequent imprisonment. Ablikim was sentenced to nine years in prison on charges of "secessionism" in April 2007.

On May 31 this year, the Chinese authorities allowed some of my children to separately visit Alim and Ablikim. Ablikim, who has heart problems, didn't say much during the visit. He did point to his heart trying to show that his heart problem is getting worse. He looked extremely pale and very skinny. Alim said that he had to do heavy prison labor and suffered tremendously as a result of the poor quality of the food. He too looked quite skinny. Prison authorities only allowed family members to give Alim 100 Chinese Yuan (around $15) monthly to pay for his food. Alim also stated that he suffered severe stomach problems, for which the authorities didn't provide medical care.

Uyghurs had hoped that the Chinese government would honor its pre-Olympic promises to the international community for greater respect of human rights. Instead, Uyghurs have seen an intensification of the long persecution it has suffered at the hands of the PRC authorities. This is a critical time for the Uyghur people, so in conclusion I will offer, in the context of the long-standing support shown by the U.S. to the Uyghur people, four recommendations to policy makers on addressing the egregious human rights abuses that prevail in East Turkestan.

I ask that the committee encourage the establishment of an international and independent body to investigate Chinese government allegations of organized Uyghur terror and the existence of ETIM or TIP.

Secondly, I ask that the committee work with the U.S. Department of State to establish a consulate in Urumchi, the regional capital, to monitor and document the deteriorating rights situation in the region.

Thirdly, I ask that the U.S. Embassy send officials to visit my children in prison.

Lastly, I ask that the committee work with the U.S. Department of State to establish a Special Envoy on Uyghur Affairs to oversee, at a senior level, the evaluation of Chinese government performance on improving human rights in East Turkestan, and the launch of dialogue on a solution to the legitimate grievances of the Uyghur people.

Thank you.

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Mr. DELAHUNT. Thank you so much, Ms. Kadeer. Next, we will start with Ms. Abramson, and then we will go to Ms. Gaer and we will end up with Nury Turkel.

STATEMENT OF MS. KARA MIRIAM ABRAMSON, ADVOCACY DIRECTOR, CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA

Ms. ABRAMSON. Thank you. In my remarks, I will provide a brief introduction to the history of the Uighurs and to the area today known as the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. The Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region is located within the northwest borders of the People's Republic of China. It occupies one-sixth of China's total territory, is a resource rich area and borders eight countries. Its population today is roughly 21 million, according to official Chinese statistics.

The Uighurs are the main indigenous ethnic group in the region. They are a Turkic ethnic group that share cultural ties with Uzbeks, Kazakhs and other central Asian populations, as well as with the Turks of Turkey. The Uighurs are Sunni Muslim and speak a language related to Turkish. As these facts suggest, the Uighurs have a distinct culture and history that is different from the Chinese. The Uighurs' home, what is today designated as the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region by the Chinese Government, is often noted as a crossroads of Asia and a hub on the Old Silk Road. This location helps explain the region's complex history.

The Government of the People's Republic of China, however, politicizes and simplifies the region's history to justify its current control over the area. The Chinese Government today says that the region has been an inseparable part of China for millennia. The reality is far different. Ruling powers in China before the PRC had varying degrees of interaction with, and in some periods a degree of control, over the region.

For much of their history, Uighurs experienced their own patterns of political rule apart from China. The Qing dynasty rulers of China conquered the region in the mid-18th century and later designated it as Xinjiang Province in 1884, but control by the Qing and its successors was often tenuous well into the 20th century. In the 1930s and 1940s, local ethnic groups declared two independent republics in the region. Communist forces took control of Xinjiang in 1949, and in 1955, the PRC Government designated the region as the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region.

This designation means Xinjiang is like a Chinese province, but in addition is entitled to special legislative powers to allow in theory for more autonomy in governance and special protections for ethnic minority populations. In reality, there are strong limits to this autonomy system to the extent that we see something that looks like the exact opposite of autonomy in Xinjiang.

Since the PRC took control of Xinjiang it has left a strong imprint in the region. As a result of state migration policies, Han Chinese, the main ethnic group in China, now constitute at least 40 percent of the region's population, up from around 6 percent in the 1950s. Uighurs, who were 75 percent of the population in the 1950s, are now around 45 percent based on official Chinese statistics.

In addition to engineering demographic shifts, we have seen other longstanding policies to promote assimilation, to remake aspects of Uighur ethnic and religious identity to conform with state goals, and to punish peaceful forms of dissent and other forms of expression. After the Cultural Revolution there was some leeway to develop and express Uighur identity in the 1980s but repression in the region has worsened since the 1990s and the PRC gained momentum to further tighten controls after 9/11.

To end, let me discuss a few of the reasons why we see this level of repression. First, it is important to remember that this is a region that is historically and culturally quite distinct from China, as the Uighurs themselves are distinct from the Han Chinese. That the region is today a part of China reflects, among other factors, the strength of the Chinese Communists in 1949 rather than the democratic will of the Uighur people.

Given these circumstances, the Chinese Government sees the region and certain assertions of ethnic and religious identity as a potential source for separatist movements that could challenge Chinese control or lead to instability. As China watched central Asian republics emerge in the 1990s, these fears became particularly acute. In addition, as I noted, Xinjiang is a resource rich area. For this, and many other reasons, China wants to hold on to it.

As for the nature of this separatist movement, Xinjiang specialists who have looked at available information have questioned the presence of a real and vigorous separatist movement inside China, but the Chinese Government nonetheless perceives a threat. Of course, with the Chinese Government's track record of manipulating data on terrorist attacks, conflating peaceful expressions and religious activity with separatist acts and imposing barriers to freedom of press, it can be quite difficult to get an accurate picture of the separatist threat claimed by the Chinese Government. What is clear, however, is the nature and scope of Chinese Government repression in the region. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Abramson follows:]

Statement Prepared for the
U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight

Hearing on

The Uighurs: A History of Persecution

Kara Abramson, Advocacy Director, Congressional-Executive Commission on China

June 10, 2009

Thank you. In my remarks, I'll provide a brief introduction to the Uyghurs and to the area today known as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region is located within the northwest borders of the People's Republic of China. It occupies 1/6th of China's total territory, is a resource-rich area, and borders eight countries. Its population today is roughly 21 million, according to official Chinese statistics.

The Uyghurs—the main indigenous ethnic group in the region—are a Turkic ethnic group that share linguistic, religious, and cultural ties with Uzbeks, Kazakhs, and other Central Asian populations, as well as with the Turks of Turkey. The Uyghurs are Sunni Muslim, their ancestors having converted to Islam starting in the 10th century.

The region's location, often noted as a crossroads of Asia and hub on the Silk Road, helps explain its complex history. The government of the People's Republic of China, however, politicizes and simplifies the region's history to justify its current control of the area. The Chinese government today says the region has been "an inseparable part" of China for millennia. The reality is far different. Ruling powers in China before the PRC had varying degrees of interaction with, and in some periods, a degree of control over, the region. Uyghurs have their own distinct culture and history, and have experienced their own patterns of political rule apart from China.

The Qing dynasty rulers of China conquered the region in the mid-18th century and later established Xinjiang province in 1884, but control by the Qing and its successors was often tenuous, well into the 20th century. In the 1930s and 1940s local ethnic groups declared two independent republics in the region.

Communist forces took control of Xinjiang in 1949, and in 1955, the PRC government designated the region as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. This designation means Xinjiang is like a Chinese province but in addition, is entitled to special legislative powers to allow, in theory, for more autonomy in governance and special protections for

ethnic minority populations. In reality, there are strong limits to this autonomy system, to the extent that we see the exact opposite of autonomy in Xinjiang.

Since the PRC took control of Xinjiang, it has left a strong imprint in the region. As a result of state policies first to force and then to heavily encourage migration, Han Chinese—the main ethnic group in China—now constitute at least 40% of the region's population, up from around 6% in the early 1950s. Uyghurs, who were 75% of the population in the 1950s, are now around 45%, according to official Chinese statistics. The remaining 15% of the population is a mix of other ethnic groups.

In addition to engineering demographic shifts, we have seen other longstanding policies to promote assimilation, remake aspects of Uyghur ethnic and religious identity to conform with state goals, and punish peaceful forms of dissent and other forms of expression. After the Cultural Revolution, there was some leeway to develop and express Uyghur identity in the 1980s, but repression in the region has worsened since the 1990s. The PRC gained momentum to further tighten controls after 9/11.

To end, let me discuss a few of the reasons why we see this level of repression. It's important to remember that the region is historically and culturally quite distinct from China, as the Uyghurs themselves are distinct from the Han Chinese. That the region is today a part of China reflects the strength of the Chinese Communists in 1949 more so than the democratic will of the Uyghur people. Given these circumstances, the Chinese government sees the region—and certain assertions of ethnic and religious identity—as a potential source for separatist movements that could challenge Chinese control and lead to "instability." As China watched Central Asian republics emerge in the 1990s, these fears became particularly acute. As I noted, Xinjiang is a resource-rich area, and for this and many other reasons, China wants to hold onto it.

As for the nature of this stated separatist movement, Xinjiang specialists who've looked at available information have questioned the presence of a real and vigorous separatist movement inside China, but the Chinese government nonetheless perceives the threat. Of course, with the Chinese government's track record of manipulating data on terrorist attacks, conflating peaceful expression and religious activity as separatist acts, and imposing barriers to freedom of press, it can be quite difficult to get an accurate picture of the separatist threat claimed by the Chinese government. What is clear, however, is the nature and scope of Chinese government repression in the region. I'd like to thank the Subcommittee and refer listeners to the Congressional-Executive Commission on China Web site for more information on conditions for Uyghurs and for access to the CECC Political Prisoner Database, which contains records of Uyghurs imprisoned for exercising their fundamental human rights.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Thank you very much. Next, we will go to Ms. Gaer.

STATEMENT OF MS. FELICE D. GAER, CHAIR, U.S. COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Ms. GAER. Thank you very much, Chairman Delahunt, and thank you to the other members for being here and holding this hearing. It is certainly a timely hearing. Last week we commemorated the brutal crackdown in Tiananmen Square. Tiananmen has been a vivid symbol of the Chinese Communist Party's abuse of its own citizens' right to speak out, to assemble and make demands on their government. We have rightly commemorated the many students and activists who protested for freedom and paid a steep price.

We also have the timeliness of this morning's newspapers about the Uighur Muslim detainees being likely to be released and possibly sent abroad. Today we are here to examine another kind of abuse which is China's egregious repression of the Uighur Muslim in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom is a Federal bipartisan commission, and we have studied and written about China for some time.

The Commission has existed for 10 years and we have been writing about China for 10 years. In 2005 we traveled there. We also went to the Uighur region. We visited Urumqi and we visited Kashgar. We have just issued our annual report a month ago and have an extensive chapter dealing with the entire situation in China, which I commend to you. Here, I will just summarize the fact that religious freedom abuses are widespread in China. Every religious group experiences some type of harassment, restriction or control.

We believe we should pay close attention to the human rights situation in Xinjiang Province, a region with an estimated 8 million Uighurs, the vast majority of whom are Muslim. We think we should do so because of enduring restrictions on the Uighur religion and culture, and growing ethnic tensions between the indigenous Uighur population and newly arrived Han Chinese migrants, as well as the repression that we have described.

Xinjiang is sometimes called China's other Tibet. Chinese Government authorities themselves commonly equate the peaceful religious practices of Uighur Muslims with religious extremism, and with separatism, and they use the global war on terror as an alleged reason to crack down on a wide variety of peaceful forms of religious activity and expression. Since 9/11, China has beefed up military and police units in the region, it has detained thousands of so-called suspected "separatists" and it has severely restricted religious freedoms which are protected under international law, and frankly, under China's own constitution.

There have been bombings, there have been other incidents in Xinjiang Province over the past two decades, but the vast majority of Uighurs seeking to enjoy their religious, civil, cultural and economic rights do so peacefully. China's wide ranging repression of the region's historic Uighur Muslim religion, language and culture has been widely criticized, in fact, as being counterproductive.

The Commission has recommended that the United States should press China to provide transparent information on terrorist activity in Xinjiang, to open trials of these so-called religious extremists and to allow international observers and lawyers access to current prisoners. Chinese restrictions on peaceful religious activity and expression in Xinjiang are particularly egregious and they are, in fact, draconian in scope.

The government continues to limit access to mosques, including the participation of women, of persons under the age of 18, of government officials, and of course, of Communist Party members themselves. Teachers, professors, university students and other government employees are simply prohibited from engaging in any religious activities, such as reciting daily prayers or distributing literature that is religious. Imams in Xinjiang are required to attend annual political training seminars to retain their licenses, and local security forces monitor imams and other religious leaders.

There continue to be an unknown number of Uighurs imprisoned for reasons related to peaceful religious activity or religious freedom advocacy. The Commission on International Religious Freedom, as well as the U.S. Department of State and Chinese sources themselves, have reported 1,300 arrests and detentions in the last year, a sharp increase from about 740 last year. Those are their numbers. The details of these cases are simply not known.

In the year leading up to the Beijing Olympics, government officials in Xinjiang expanded measures to strengthen control over Uighur religious activity. Some of the new measures undertaken include campaigns to "weaken religious consciousness." That is a quote of the phrase used by the Chinese leaders.

So campaigns to weaken religious consciousness among women and among young people, rules to expel religious leaders for missing required political indoctrination courses, requirements to monitor students in schools particularly, and also to monitor them during their school vacations, and also campaigns to confiscate so-called illegal religious publications and to close so-called illegal religious centers. Now, the Congressional Executive Commission on China, the Uighur American Foundation and our Commission have many more examples of such restrictions and abuses targeting the Uighurs.

I have limited time so I wanted to concentrate the remaining time on a few recommendations. First of all, prisoners. The Commission believes it is important for Members of Congress to repeatedly raise individual prisoner cases with Chinese officials and to seek to meet imprisoned Uighurs during official visits to China. We also wish you luck on getting to visit the prisoners in Guantanamo. It is important to have such visits because they raise the profile of these prisoners.

In terms of the visits in China, they would demonstrate the fact that the United States advocates for religious freedom of Muslims just as much as it does for Christians, Jews, Bahai's and Buddhists. Since we do, why not show it? Ms. Kadeer's children, including Ablikim Abdureyim, need those visits. That information about the visit in May is extraordinarily important and moving and it should create a sense of urgency. If we can get the consulate to go

out there, great. If we can't, maybe it is time for the Congress to try again.

Secondly, we believe that the United States-China human rights dialogue, which has been reestablished, should be strengthened. The recently renewed dialogue will include a working group on human rights, we are told. Will it be focused on achieving measurable and concrete results or will it only be a talk shop? The Commission thinks the Congress can play an important role in suggesting to other parts of the government that this dialogue can be successful.

The way you can do that is to ask the State Department to submit a report to the appropriate congressional committees detailing the extent to which China has made progress on a series of benchmarks and issues specified by the Congress. Congress has done this in the case of Vietnam. No reason you couldn't do the same thing with regard to China.

Third recommendation. Raising Chinese human rights issues at the United Nations. The U.S. has recently rejoined the Human Rights Council, been elected as a member. It is present, and a presence, at the General Assembly and other bodies as well.

The commission believes the United States should raise publicly concerns about human rights abuses against the Uighurs in appropriate multilateral and international fora, including the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, and that it is important to ensure that preparations for such action are made at appropriately high levels. Working year round with these bodies, the United States can help produce the type of multinational attention that can command attention in China and improve compliance with human rights standards by its government.

Fourth, the Commission urges the Obama administration to take targeted action under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. The Congress created this act. Our Commission exists because of it. Under it, the United States Government identifies the systematic and egregious violators of freedom of religion on an annual basis. If a country is so designated, as China has been for many years now, that country also will be identified with certain "Presidential actions." Unfortunately, previous administrations have used preexisting sanctions only, sanctions that were first put in place after Tiananmen.

There have been no unique sanctions with regard to China that deal with religious freedom. Such a practice provides little incentive for China to address the religious freedom violations, including those that are in Xinjiang Province. The Commission recommends a break with the past on these practices, that there should be new Presidential actions or sanctions that would focus either on state agencies or officials in the area where the problems are, those who are responsible for egregious religious freedom conditions.

Xinjiang and its officials could be the target of such sanctions as one of the worst offenders of religious freedom in China. We hope that Members of Congress can help the Commission make the strongest case for such action directly with the White House and the Department of State. Finally, we echo the recommendation made by Ms. Kadeer about opening a consulate in Urumqi. It would be a dramatic addition.

Finally, we believe that there should be a transparent mechanism created in China for reviewing cases of persons detained under suspicion of offenses related to state security or participating in so-called illegal gatherings or religious activities. They have been barely afforded any due process. There is a need to look again there. We hope you can help with that as well. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Gaer follows:]

Testimony of

Felice Gaer, Chair
United States Commission on International Religious Freedom

on

The Uighurs: A History of Persecution

Before

The Subcommittee on Human Rights, International Organizations, and International Terrorism of the

Committee on Foreign Affairs

June 10, 2009

Last week we commemorated the brutal crackdown on the Tiananmen Square protestors. Over the past twenty years, Tiananmen has become a vivid symbol of the Chinese Communist Party's abuse of its own citizens' rights to speak out, assemble, and make demands of their government. We rightly commemorate the many students and activists who protested for freedom and paid a steep price. We are gathered here today to examine another kind of abuse, China's systematic and egregious repression of the Uighur Muslims in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. Since September 11, 2001, China has beefed up military and police units in the region; detained thousands of so-called suspected separatists; and severely restricted religious freedoms which are protected under international law and China's constitution.

Unfortunately, suppression of peaceful religious activity and expression is common in China. There are millions of Chinese who have either stood up for the protection of religious freedom or sought to peacefully engage in religious activities who have faced arrest, torture, "disappearances," harassment, and discrimination. Tibetan Buddhists, Protestants and Catholics who refuse to join the government-controlled religious organizations, Falun Gong adherents, human rights defenders and lawyers, and Uighur Muslims have faced such abuses.

Religious freedom abuses are widespread in China, but we should pay close attention to the human rights situation in Xinjiang Province, a region with an estimated eight million Uighurs, the vast majority of whom are Muslim. Because of enduring restrictions on Uighur religion and culture and growing ethnic tensions between the indigenous Uighur population and newly arrived Han Chinese migrants, Xinjiang is sometimes called "China's other Tibet."

Chinese government authorities themselves commonly equate the peaceful religious practices of Uighur Muslims with religious extremism and separatism and use the global war on terror as a pretext to crack down on peaceful forms of religious activity and expression. Though there have been bombings and other incidents in Xinjiang over the past two decades, including several incidents before the Olympic games, the vast majority of Uighurs seeking to enjoy their religious, civil, cultural, and economic rights do so peacefully.

It is understandable that the Chinese leadership should counter real terrorist threats and seek to maintain China's territorial integrity, but the wide-ranging repression of the region's historic Uighur religion, language and culture has only been counterproductive.

China claims that there are terrorist groups active in Xinjiang. Unfortunately, China has not been transparently providing information to the international community about these groups. For example, trials of so-called "religious extremists" are conducted secretly and without proper legal counsel. Numerous experts have stated that China's claims about organized terrorist activity too often are "exaggerated."

China continues to use the pretext of terrorism as an excuse to crack down on all peaceful religious activity, expression, and dissent. For example, during the past several years, Chinese government officials have tightened restrictions on the practice of Islam in Xinjiang (though not elsewhere in China), policed Uighur cultural expressions, destroyed historic Uighur sections of Kashgar, stoked ethnic rivalries by offering economic incentives and reserving government jobs for Chinese migrants, and continued its crackdown on peaceful religious activity and education.

Chinese restrictions on peaceful religious activity and expression in Xinjiang are particularly egregious and draconian in scope. In the year leading up to the Beijing Olympics, government officials in Xinjiang expanded measures to strengthen control over Uighur religious activity. New measures include campaigns to "weaken religious consciousness" among women and young people; rules to expel religious leaders for missing required political indoctrination courses; requirements to monitor students during their school vacations; and campaigns to confiscate so-called "illegal religious publications" and shutter "illegal religious centers."

The government continues to limit access to mosques, including the participation of women, children and communist party members. Teachers, professors, university students, and other government employees are prohibited from engaging in any religious activities, such as reciting daily prayers, distributing religious

materials, observing Ramadan, and wearing head coverings; they are reportedly subject to fines if they attempt to do so.

All imams in Xinjiang are required to attend annual political training seminars to retain their licenses, and local security forces monitor imams and other religious leaders. Imams at Uighur mosques reportedly are required to meet monthly with officials from the Religious Affairs Bureau and the Public Security Bureau to receive advice on the content of their sermons.

Muslims are not the only religious faith to experience severe repression in Xinjiang. Xinjiang province ranked near the top in the number of Protestant "house church" adherents detained or arrested during the previous year. 107 people were detained and three religious leaders imprisoned during the past year. Only three other Chinese provinces had more detentions.

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Let me offer you some recent examples to show how far Chinese officials have gone to curtail and control peaceful Uighur Muslim religious activity.

- In February 2009, officials in Awat county called for the "infiltration" of religious venues and groups to gather information and stop instances of "illegal scripture reading" and "religious interference in marriages."

- In March 2009, officials in the city of Hotan stated that anyone engaged in "cross-village worship will be charged with a social crime" and subject to detention or fines.

- In February 2009, officials in Kashgar district issued a series of new measures to counter "half-baked" religious understanding among imams, including implementing a detailed system of oversight to enforce political training among imams, expel religious leaders who miss required study sessions, and require Friday sermons to discuss government policy on economic development.

- In February 2009 public security officials closed three "illegal" sites of religious instruction and detained over 20 people in Lop and Awat counties,

as part of their efforts to "strike hard" against separatism and "cult" activities.

- Also in February 2009, officials in Hotan started a campaign to halt "illegal religious schools." According to press reports, armed security personnel conducted nighttime searches, closing seven schools and detaining 39 people.

Government officials in Xinjiang are taking steps to actively discourage the growth of Islam among young people, restrictions that go beyond China's national laws in this regard. During the Commission's 2005 visit to China, local government officials confirmed that minors were prohibited from participating in any religious activity or instruction before finishing nine years of compulsory public education. This policy contradicts statements made by Beijing officials who claim that there are no restrictions prohibiting the private religious education or activities of minors.

Uighurs are prohibited from teaching Islam outside the home to minors, and police have stepped up attempts to halt private religious education programs. Police reportedly are stationed outside mosques to enforce rules forbidding children and government employees from attending services. There are also reports that in some areas, individuals under the age of 30 are prohibited from attending a mosque.

Teachers of "underground" religious education class have been charged with conducting illegal religious gatherings. In some parts of Xinjiang, there are reports that teachers are being urged to refrain from participating in religious activity and required to take part in re-education courses to "battle against separatism."

The State Department estimates that more than 1,300 people were arrested in Xinjiang on charges related to state security over the past year, a large increase from the previous year. National security charges have been used to detain religious adherents engaged in "religious extremism" or "illegal religious activities." Due to the lack of judicial transparency, and the government's equation of peaceful religious activity with terrorism, it is difficult to determine how many prisoners are being held for conducting peaceful religious activity, for

peacefully protesting restrictions on the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, or for engaging in some other legal activity.

Many Uighur Muslims are detained in horrendous conditions. They often are tortured and mistreated in prison, including Rebiya Kadeer's sons. I want to highlight briefly three other cases to demonstrate the varied charges leveled against peaceful Uighur Muslims.

- In February 2009, Abdukadir Mahsum was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment for organizing peaceful demonstrations promoting religious freedom and other human rights concerns.

- In March 2008, Mutallip Hajim died in detention after being arrested for his activities helping underground Muslim schools. He was reportedly tortured, but his family was warned not to publicize his death.

- On August 10, 2008, Imam Adil Qarim was arrested, and has since disappeared, allegedly because several suspects in a bomb attack attended his mosque.

Conclusions & Recommendations:

It is important to continue to raise the cases of Uighurs imprisoned in China for peaceful religious activity and expression. Members of Congress should repeatedly raise such cases with Chinese officials and seek to meet with imprisoned Uighurs during official visits to China.

It is also important to continue to raise the cases of Uighurs because the United States is committed to defend the rights and freedoms of all persons around the world. In many places of the world, Muslims, like the Uighurs, are victims of repression. As part of a foreign policy that seeks to promote transparent and tolerant societies, the U.S. should continue to advocate for the religious freedom of Muslims as well as it does for Christians, Jews, Bahai's, and Buddhists.

Uighurs in China merit our ongoing and serious attention. Other than raising individuals cases, what else can Members of Congress do to address the repression of Uighurs in China?

1.) **Strengthen The U.S.-China Human Rights Dialogue**

In April, a Human Rights Dialogue was announced as part of a renewed U.S.-China Strategic Dialogue. In the past, human rights dialogues with China have become "talk shops" that do not lead to concrete results. It is a frustration of diplomats and activists alike. The U.S. should show that human rights are linked to other strategic concerns by setting clear benchmarks and sending delegations with high level U.S. officials. Congress can play an important role in ensuring the success of the dialogues by requiring that the State Department submit a report to the appropriate congressional committees detailing the issues discussed in the previous year's dialogue and describing the extent to which the Government of China has made progress on a series of issues specified by Congress. Congress has already mandated such a report for the bilateral dialogue with Vietnam (Sec. 702 of PL 107-228) which should be the model of Congressional oversight of the U.S.-China human rights dialogues. Congress also should make sure that difficult issues, such as repression of Uighur Muslims, are part of the bilateral discussions.

2.) **Raise publicly concerns about Human Rights Abuses against the Uighurs in appropriate multilateral and international fora, including the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council and ensure that preparations for such action are made at appropriately high levels.**

Since China's signing of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the PRC has become increasingly involved in the international human rights system, not always to good effect. By working year-round with international human rights bodies, the United States can help produce the type of multinational attention and action that may command attention in China and improve compliance with human rights standards by the government.

3.) **Urge the Obama Administration to take targeted action under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.**

China has been named a Country of Particular Concern since 1999. The CPC designation requires the President to take a specific action to address religious freedom abuses, including diplomatic, political, or economic sanctions. Previous

Administrations have used "pre-existing" sanctions first put in place after Tiananmen. Such a practice provides little incentive for China to address religious freedom violations, including in Xinjiang.

The Commission has recommended that the Obama Administration should break with the practices of past Administrations and issue a new Presidential action or sanction that would focus on either state agencies or officials who perpetuate religious freedom abuses or provinces where religious freedom conditions are the most egregious. Xinjiang province and its officials should be the target of such sanctions—as one of the worst offenders of religious freedom in China.

4.) **Open a consulate in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region.**

The U.S. government should urge the Chinese government to allow a U.S. government presence in Xinjiang, both to expand economic contacts and to monitor religious freedom and other human rights conditions.

5.) Create a transparent mechanism for reviewing cases of persons detained under suspicion of, or charged with, offenses relating to state security, "religious extremism," "counterrevolutionary" or "splittist" activities, or organizing or participating in "illegal" gatherings or religious activities.

China should give a full accounting of those imprisoned and detained on vague criminal offenses, inconsistent with international standards. Given the large and growing number of Uighur prisoners, such a mechanism is need to review the large number of cases of detained or imprisoned religious leaders and others in Xinjiang.

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The Commission was created to be a resource and advisor to Congress on ways to protect religious freedom and related rights internationally. We look forward to working with you on China, the protection of Uighurs, and the advancement of religious freedom globally.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Thank you so much, Ms. Gaer. Last, but certainly not least, Mr. Turkel. Nury, would you please proceed.

STATEMENT OF MR. NURY TURKEL, UIGHUR RIGHTS ACTIVIST AND ATTORNEY

Mr. TURKEL. Thank you. Chairman Delahunt, Ranking Member Rohrabacher and members of the subcommittee, I want to thank you for holding this hearing. I am extremely grateful for your interest and leadership in examining the critical issues affecting the future of the Uighur people, including the problem of economic, social, cultural discrimination, denial of religious freedom, the impact of so-called war on terror in Chinese version, and China's misuse of its global influence, and finally, the fate of the 17 Uighur prisoners in Guantanamo.

The Uighur people greatly appreciate any efforts that could help promoting and protecting their freedoms, including the rights to be Muslim. Like Tibetans, Uighurs have endured decades of discrimination, brutal oppression under Communist Chinese rule. According to various human rights organizations, Uighurs are almost without exception the only ethnic group in China to be regularly executed for nonviolent political offenses.

Since 9/11 in particular, Beijing has taken advantage of antiterrorism sentiment using the United States-led war on terror as an excuse to oppress Uighurs with impunity, including many who have peacefully protested their treatment. Ironically, China regularly portrays Uighur historians, poets, writers, as intellectual terrorists and jailed them for expressing their ideas in the written and spoken word. Today, Uighurs face not just daily humiliation and discrimination but harsh persecution, and even threat of cultural and religious extinction.

A few years ago Chinese Communist Party Chief Wang Lequan said "Xinjiang will always keep up the intensity of its crackdown on ethnic separatist forces and deal them devastating blows without showing any mercy." As promised, over the past several years Chinese leaders brutally punish Uighurs who even peacefully express dissent and who actively oppose China's ongoing onslaught against Uighurs' ethno-national identity.

These aggressive policies are mostly targeted against Uighurs' religious and cultural identity. Now I would like to discuss challenges the Uighurs face under Chinese Communist rule in greater detail. China's cultural repression of the Uighurs is not reactive. It is a deliberate policy to control, monitor and sterilize Uighur culture so it cannot be a vehicle for self-rule and even challenge to the Communist state.

A key component of this effort is to eliminate literary, academic and professional use of the Uighur language. Since 2002, the bilingual education policy has mandated the use of Mandarin Chinese as a primary language of instruction for Uighur students throughout the education system. This is a precision attack, a cruise missile, if you will, against Uighur culture in attempt to dumb it down and subvert it Mandarin Chinese.

I think Communist China's top man in the Uighur region, Wang Lequan, made Chinese intentions very clear when he said the adoption of the Chinese will improve the quality of ethnic minori-

ties because indigenous language are out of the step with the 21st century. Mr. Chairman, Uighurs were the stewards of the central Asian Silk Roads and the Uighur cultural background makes them well-suited to promote trade and keep up with the pace of the globalization. The beauty of the Uighur culture does not need Wang Lequan or other Communist leaders' improvements.

China's plan for Uighurs continue. Just last week China Daily quoted a chairman of Xinjiang regional government, Nur Bekri, as saying that "terrorists from neighboring countries mainly target Uighurs that are relatively isolated from mainstream society as they cannot speak Mandarin that are then tricked into terrorist activities." Mr. Chairman, these troubling comments imply that those Uighurs who can speak only their native language are inherently terrorist suspects, and therefore, government must force the Chinese language upon them.

In other words, the parlance of Chinese Communists double speak. Mr. Bekri is attempting to justify a language planning policy aimed at eliminating the Uighur language in the education system on security grounds. Clearly, this is another attempt to label peaceful Uighurs as terror suspects and indicates intensification in the Chinese authority's campaign against the Uighur language. Chinese Government does not stop at the Uighur language. It also openly attacked Uighur culture and history.

The current Communist leadership in Beijing, taking Chairman Mao's advice to use the past to serve the President, has engaged in open and concerted efforts to revise Uighur nation's history to fit their world view that Uighur homeland has been part of China since ancient times. As a result, cultural promotion and research are plainly frowned upon by the Communist authorities, with historians, cultural leaders, researchers and activists detained and subjected to long prisons.

Even writers of fiction have been accused and punished for advocating so-called splittist thinking. For instance, in 2005, a young intellectual, Nurmemet Yasin, was sentenced to a decade in prison for writing allegorical short story comparing the plight of the Uighur people to that of a caged pigeon. The assault on Uighur identity has recently escalated to include the demolition of traditional Uighur buildings in Kashgar. Uighur home, ancient bazaars and mosques will be destroyed.

Mr. Chairman, I was born in Kashgar. I was born and raised in Kashgar. It is a serious blow to know that 1,000 years of Uighur culture and history integrated through the physical space and architecture of an old city will be destroyed as a result of China's political motivated policies. It will be immeasurable loss for the Uighur people. It will also be a loss for the citizens of the world as the atrophy of the global cultural heritage sites continues. Before the plans complete, I urge you to attempt to visit Kashgar, if Chinese will let you, to see my home one last time before they destroy it completely.

I would like to now talk about how the Chinese Government has systematically used Uighurs' religious identity to further their policies. The Chinese constitution, law and propaganda all insist that ethnic minorities enjoy religious freedom, but the Uighurs are given significantly less breathing space than other Muslim minori-

ties. Reason for this is that China sees Uighurs' ethno-national identity as disloyal to the Communist state, and Islam is perceived as feeding this Uighur ethnic identity.

Apparently, even in the United States or in the west the Uighur religious identity also made them an easy target for slander and falsehood. Recently, a few pundits have claimed that the Uighurs' ultimate goal is to establish Sharia Law-based state. This is patently false and strangely echoes Chinese propaganda. It is deeply perplexing and equally worrying that some Western media have helped to further this perception with reports that include no examination of Chinese propaganda claims that the Uighurs are not religious extremists or radicals.

In fact, in the early part of the last century, the Uighurs' homeland of east Turkistan was the first secular and democratic republic to be established in the Muslim world outside of Turkey. The Uighur case is proudly secular and democratic with guarantees of religious freedom and for peaceful enjoyment of this and other fundamental human rights.

Mr. Chairman, the Uighurs' domestic and international travel has been restricted as well, specifically in two forms: Racial profiling and confiscation of passports. Chinese Government propaganda campaigns against the Uighur people have made them subject to racial profiling in Chinese cities. Uighurs have been easily identified and targeted because of their appearance and ethnic origin. Basic services, such as lodging, transportation, even public bath houses, are not available for Uighurs in Chinese cities.

For example, in 2008 hotels and bath houses in Beijing's Haidian District were ordered not to allow the Uighurs and Tibetans to use their facilities. Also, large numbers of passports belonging to the Uighurs have been confiscated since early 2007, and that is making it impossible for Uighurs to travel abroad for business or educational purposes, or to visit family members abroad as part of family reunification, or for family and community events, such as wedding, funerals, or to go to religious pilgrimage, including hadj.

All citizens of China, there is a fundamental difference, with the exception of Tibetans and the Uighurs can generally obtain passports through a fairly simple process. In the foreign countries, specifically for the Uighurs who managed to flee Communist China by crossing into neighboring central Asian and south Asian countries, for example, are extremely vulnerable for being deported back to China under bilateral agreement that completely ignore and undermine international refugee laws which are often a result of China's growing untoward influence upon its country's political and security structures.

Just recently Pakistan had deported several Uighurs for suspect of being involved in a Uighur political movement. In conclusion, let me say this, Mr. Chairman. Discrimination and restriction of movement, denial of services at hotels and other establishments, makes Uighurs feel second class citizens within China. Communist China is using policy which, in my view, are being used to not marginalize, if not wipe out, the Uighur identity.

Uighur culture have adopted and thrived for centuries, and the Uighurs do not seek isolation. The Uighurs must be allowed to worship, speak, write and think without fear of reprisal. The Uighur

people admire American foundational, American ideals of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. Many Uighurs, we view the United States as a beacon of hope that will assist them in their quest for the same fundamental freedom and basic human dignity.

The Uighur people are fully in agreement with American beliefs that to end the tyranny in the world and the consequent spread of true democracy and respect for human rights are best defense against radical extremism of any kind. Mr. Chairman, America needs to be Uighurs main source of hope. To accomplish that, to do that, President Obama should publicly express serious concerns over the deteriorating human rights situation in east Turkistan.

Also, a senior State Department official, preferably the new ambassador, should visit the Uighur region idly to meet with a dissident and family members of political prisoners. Finally, United States should allow 17 Uighurs currently languishing in Guantanamo in the United States. The Uighurs are the human face of the mistakes made in Guantanamo. There is no better way to fix those mistakes other than bringing the Uighurs into the United States and let them restart their lives and be proud of this proud Uighur-American community here, in this country. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Turkel follows:]

TESTIMONY OF NURY A. TURKEL

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION, HUMAN RIGHT, AND OVERSIGHT
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

HEARING ON

The Uyghurs: A History of Persecution

JUNE 10, 2009

Chairman Delahunt, Ranking Member Rohrabacher, and all members of the Subcommittee, I want to thank you for holding this hearing. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to speak to you today about the plight of the Uyghur people. I am also thankful for your interest and leadership in examining the critical issues affecting the future of the Uyghur people, including the problem of economic, social, cultural discrimination, denial of religious freedom, the impact of the "war on terror," China's misuse of its global influence, and fate of the 17 Uyghur prisoners in Guantanamo. I and other Uyghurs greatly appreciate any efforts that could help promoting and protecting their freedoms including, the rights to be Muslim.

The Uyghurs are Turkic people and they mainly live in East Turkistan, which was occupied by communist China since 1949. Like Tibetans, Uyghurs have endured decades of discrimination and brutal oppression under Chinese rule. A religious and ethnic minority, they are routinely denied basic civil, religious, and political rights. Uyghurs are, almost without exception, the only ethnic group in China to be routinely executed for political offenses. Since 9/11, Beijing has taken advantage of anti-terrorism sentiment, using the U.S.-led "war on terror" as an excuse to oppress Uyghurs with impunity, persecuting many who have peacefully protested their treatment. China regularly portrays Uyghur historians, poets and writers "intellectual terrorists" and sends them to jail.

Today, Uyghurs face not just daily humiliation and discrimination, but harsh persecution and even the threat of cultural and religious extinction. A few years ago, Chinese Communist Party Xinjiang Chief Wang Lequan said *"Xinjiang will always keep up the intensity of its crackdown on ethnic separatist forces and deal them devastating blows without showing any mercy."* As promised, over the past several years, Chinese leaders have ruthlessly punished the Uyghurs who even peacefully expressed dissent and opposed China's ongoing onslaught against Uyghurs' ethno-national identity. These aggressive policies are mostly targeted on Uyghurs' religious and cultural identity.

Now, I would like to discuss the challenge Uyghurs face under Chinese rule in greater detail.

1. **<u>China's Continued Campaign Against Uyghur Identity</u>**

   - **Cultural destruction**

Late last August, Xinjiang communist party chief Wang Lequan has vowed "preemptive strikes" on Uyghurs. He has been also advocating "re-education" drive to enhance Uyghurs' "identification with Chinese nation and culture."

China's cultural repression of the Uyghurs *<u>isn't reactive</u>* – it is a deliberate policy to control, monitor and sterilize Uyghur culture so it cannot be a vehicle for self-rule or even challenge the state.

Han Chinese generally treats Uyghurs as inferiors and look down on Uyghur culture. Chinese are taught that Uyghurs are backward, "younger brothers" that need help from their more civilized Han "older brothers."

A key component of this effort is to eliminate literary, academic, and professional use of Uyghur. Since 2002, the "bilingual" education policy has mandated the use of Mandarin Chinese as the primary language of instruction for Uyghur students throughout the education system. Uyghur language schools are being converted to Chinese only or so-called Bi-lingual schools all across the Uyghur homeland. This is a precision attack—a cruise missile if you will--against Uyghur culture, an attempt to dumb it down and subvert it to Mandarin Chinese. I think Beijing's top man in the Uyghur homeland, Wang Lequan made Chinese intentions clear when he said adoption of Chinese will "improve the quality of ethnic minorities because indigenous languages are out-of-step with the 21st century."

Mr. Chairman, Uyghurs were the stewards of the silk roads, and our cultural background makes us well suited to promote trade and globalization. The beauty of Uyghur culture does not need Wang's "improvement."

Nevertheless, China's plans for Uyghurs continue. Just last week, the China Daily, the Chinese government's English language newspaper, quoted the Governor of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region—the titular head of government--Nur Bekri as saying that "[t]errorists from neighboring countries mainly target Uygurs [Uyghurs] that are relatively isolated from mainstream society as they cannot speak Mandarin. They are then tricked into terrorist activities." Mr. Bekri's comments imply—that those Uyghurs who only speak their mother tongue are inherently terrorist suspects, and therefore government must force Chinese language upon us. In other words, in the parlance of Chinese communist doublespeak-Mr. Bekri is attempting to justify a language planning policy aimed at eliminating the use of the Uyghur language in the education system. Clearly, this is another attempt to label peaceful Uyghurs as terrorist suspects and indicate intensification in the Chinese authorities' campaign to marginalize the Uyghur language.

Chinese government does not stop at our language, they also openly attack Uyghur culture and history. The current Chinese communist leadership, taking Chairman Mao's advice to "use the past to serve the present" has engaged in an open, concerted effort to revise our region's history to fit their worldview that our homeland has been "part of China since ancient times" As a

result, cultural promotion and research are plainly frowned upon by the Communist authorities, with historians, cultural leaders, researchers, and activists detained and subjected to long prison terms. Some writers even accused and punished for advocating "splittist thinking." For instance, in 2005, a young intellectual, Nurmemet Yasin, was sentenced to a decade in prison for writing an allegory likening the predicament to that of a pigeon in a cage.

The assault on Uyghur identity has recently escalated to include the demolition of traditional Uyghur buildings in Kashgar. Uyghur homes, ancient bazaars, and mosques will be destroyed. Some 200,000 people in 65,000 Uyghur households will be forcibly removed from this historic area, a catastrophe for the Uyghur people and a devastating blow to Uyghur identity. Here's how Professor Wu Dianting of Beijing Normal University's School of Geography described the significance of what's happening in a recent report in *The Washington Post*: "The old town also reflects the Muslim culture of the Uyghurs very well – it has the original taste and flavor without any changes...Here, Uyghur culture is attached to those raw earth buildings. If they are town down, the affiliated culture will be destroyed."

I was born and raised in Kashgar. It is a serious blow to know that a thousand years of Uyghur culture and history integrated through the physical space and architecture of the *Old City* will be destroyed as a result of China's politically motivated policies. It will be an immeasurable loss for the Uyghur people. It also will be a loss for the citizens of the world as the atrophy of our global cultural heritage sites continues. Before the plans are complete, I urge you to attempt to visit Kashgar, if the Chinese will let you, to see my home one last time before it is destroyed.

- **Religious oppression**

I would now like to talk about how the Chinese Communist government has a systematic campaign against the Uyghur practice of Islam. The bottom line is that Uyghurs are denied the freedom to practice Islam. Yet For most Uyghurs the overriding issue is not religion *per se*, but the perceived threat that religious repression poses to their distinct identity coupled with their acute feeling of being colonized. Uyghurs view the tight restrictions placed by the Chinese authorities on Uyghur Islam as an attempt to debase their very identity, as Islam is an essential component of their traditional identity and value.

Chinese constitution, laws, and propaganda all insist that its minorities enjoy religious freedom, but Uyghurs—seen as a threat to Chinese rule—are given significantly less breathing space than other Muslim minorities within China. The reason being that China sees Uyghurs' ethno-national identity as disloyal to the China state, and Islam is perceived as feeding this Uyghur ethnic identity.

The subjugation of Islam to the Chinese state is used as a means to ensure the subordination of Uyghurs as well. As such, China strictly controls and manages all mosques and religious activities. It stifles standard religious traditions that have formed a crucial part of the Uyghur identity for centuries.

As a result, Uyghur Muslims experience harassment in their daily lives. Observing religious holidays, studying religious texts, or showing one's religion through personal appearance are

strictly forbidden at schools, government offices, or even in public places. The government has instituted controls over who can be a clerk, what version of the Qur'an may be used, where religious gatherings may be held, and what may be said on religious occasion. For example, government officials, state employees, children under 18, and women are prohibited from entering the mosque and conducting religious activities. Violations of these can result in expulsion, heavy fines, entries into the personal file, administrative punishment, including detention and imprisonment. Uyghur religious figures who have leadership qualities, separatist tendencies, or disloyal political views have faced harsh punishment, including imprisonment. A number of young and progressive minded Imams have been removed or even imprisoned because of their refusal to use mosques to praise the motherland and the Party. In June 2008, a mosque near Aksu city was demolished because of it's refusal to put up signs in support of the Beijing Olympics.

According to various media reports during the month of Ramadan in 2008:

- Prayer in public places outside the main mosque is forbidden and an imam's sermon is limited to a half-hour
- Local authorities required some Uyghur-owned restaurants to remain open during the day, when Muslims normally fast
- Free lunches forced to break fasting and most importantly identify believers
- Government employees have been told to shave their beards, and police have been ordering women to remove their veils

A few pundits in the U.S. recently have claimed that the Uyghurs' ultimate goal is to establish a sharia state. This is patently false and strangely echoes Chinese propaganda. We are not wahabists, we are not radicals. In fact, in the early part of the last century, the Uyghurs' homeland of East Turkistan was the first secular and democratic republic to be established in the Muslim world outside of Turkey. The Uyghur case is proudly secular, democracy with guarantees of religious freedom and peaceful enjoyment of this and other human rights. Religious freedom for all, even those who do not share their particular faith, is a paramount issue to the Uyghurs as they struggle to preserve their distinct national and cultural identity.

China's attempt to suppress our fundamental right to practice our religion not only profoundly violates human rights principles, but Ironically, the unreasonable restrictions against Uyghur religion further alienates the Uyghurs. This drives religious expression further underground, and encourages the development of more radicalized and oppositional forms of religious identity. If the current trend continues, moderate voices that could mediate tensions between the Chinese state and Uyghurs are likely to shrink.

On top of all of this there is sheer repression, which the Chinese government tries to justify in the post 9/11 era by saying that it is a response to terrorism. In fact, the repression began long before 9/11, and its purpose was not to stop terrorism but suppress Uyghur dissent. For example, on February 5, 1997, fully armed paramilitary police fired on a peaceful demonstration by 10-15,000 Uyghur youth, who were marching to the municipal government offices to protest racial and religious discrimination.

China effectively exploited the post 9/11 climate that followed the attacks in the US. Arrest of some Uyghurs in Afghanistan/Pakistan helped China to consistently and successfully portrayed Uyghurs as the source of a serious terrorist threat in China. This perception seems to have now become dominant with the Chinese public. The lack of free media made it almost impossible to compare the sources of information and to make independent judgments about these claims. It's mind-boggling that some Western media also helped to further this perception with its reports without careful examination of the Chinese claims.

2. **Restriction on Uyghurs' freedom of movement**

Uyghurs' domestic and international travel has been restricted in two forms: racial profiling and confiscation of passports.

Chinese government's propaganda campaign against the Uyghur people made them vulnerable for racial profiling in inner Chinese cities. Uyghurs can be easily identified and targeted because of their appearance and ethnic origin. Basic services such as lodging, transportation, even public bath houses are not available for the Uyghurs in inner cities. For instance, in 2008, hotels and bathhouses in Beijing's Haidian District ordered not to allow Uyghurs and Tibetans to use their facilities. These orders were purportedly put in place for the Olympics, but they are still in place. Additionally, a large numbers of Uyghurs evicted from Chinese cities before the Olympics, and most of them are not allowed to return major cities including, Beijing and Shanghai.

A majority of Uyghurs' passports have been confiscated since early 2007. Chinese citizens, with exception of Tibetans and Uyghurs, can obtain passport through a fairly simple process.

The Article 1 of the China's Passport laws, enacted on 1/1/2007, guarantees PRC citizens rights and interests of exiting and entering China and promotes international travel and cultural exchange with foreign countries." Article 6 instructs the authorities to process and issue a passport within 15 days after receiving the application. If it disapproves, the authorities should give the applicant a written explanation and inform him of his right to apply for an administrative review or to lodge an administrative lawsuit." Also, the authorities deny issuing passport if it believes that the person leaving China will do harm to the state security or result in serious losses to the benefits of the state.

China's discriminatory implementation of passport laws and regulations has prevented family unifications and visits overseas. E.g. Uyghur parents could not attend significant events such weddings and funerals.

In conclusion, let me say this:

Discrimination, restriction of movement, denial of services at hotels and other establishments makes Uyghurs feel like second class citizens within China. The Chinese have failed at integrating our two controls and giving us a stake in the future of China. Instead, they are using policies which – in my opinion—are being used to marginalize if not wipe out Uyghur identity. Uyghur culture had adapted and thrived for centuries. We do not seek isolation. But Uyghurs must be allowed to worship, speak, write, and think without fear of reprisal.

3. Recommendations to the United States

U.S. government's hasty designation of ETIM as a terrorist organization in 2002 has given a 'green light' to China to intensify its crackdown on political dissent in the region. ETIM designation also provided the Chinese with a very useful propaganda tools that the US is helping China to destroy Uyghurs' democratic aspirations. China opportunistically used the post-9/11 environment to make the outrageous claim that individuals disseminating peaceful religious and cultural messages in E. Turkistan are terrorists who have simply changed tactics. Many devout Uyghur Muslims have been subjected to arrest, imprisonment, torture, and even execution.

America needs to be the Uyghurs' main source of hope. To do that, President Obama should publicly express serious concerns over deteriorating human rights situation in East Turkistan

- Appoint a Special Coordinator for the Uyghurs at the State Department, just like what Tibet has
- A senior State Department official, preferably the new Ambassador, should visit the region to meet with dissidents and family members of political prisoners
- Provide funding for cultural exchange and educational programs for the Uyghurs in East Turkistan.
- Encourage China to grant and restore Uyghur cultural and religious rights during religious and human rights dialogs
- Finally, we should allow 17 Gitmo Uyghurs to resettle in the U.S. I understand there are concerns—but look at the facts. The Department of Defense has determined that men were never a threat to the United States. I would never let anyone harm my new home or embarrass the Uyghur people. But I have met the men and I can assure you—Newt Gingrich's concerns notwithstanding—that unequivocally pose no threat to America. Therefore, this should really be a no-brainer. It would send a strong signal to the Muslim world and our Allies that the United States is able to differentiate between oppressed minorities and violent religious extremists. And Uyghurs all across East Turkistan would know where the United States stands.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Thank you, Nury. I am going to ask the vice chair to take the chair for a moment as I have some calls to make, but let me call on the ranking member for his questions. Mr. Rohrabacher.

Mr. ROHRABACHER [presiding]. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. There have been many false statements made about the Uighurs in the last 6 months to a year, and I think the best and most effective way to combat falsehood is not to ignore a charge, but instead, to explore it and talk about it, and so I am going to be pursuing information from you and ask you questions based on charges that I certainly do not agree with but I think they need to be answered in the public so the public will be able to have that information available to them.

Perhaps the most sinister of the charges about the 17 Uighurs being held at Guantanamo is that these are people who believe in Sharia Law and that they are radical Islamists who are tied to al-Qaeda; after all, that is why they were in Afghanistan, and that thus, on the face of it, that they would pose a threat to the United States. That is perhaps a capsulization of the charge that was made or the statements that were made to justify the continued incarceration of the Uighurs in Guantanamo. So let me ask that.

Mr. Turkel, you mentioned specifically that Uighurs do not believe in Sharia Law. First of all, in general, is that accepted by the panel, that the Uighurs as a whole are not people who are aiming to try to create a society based on Sharia Law? We will ask specifically also about those particular 17 Uighurs in Guantanamo. We will start with Mr. Turkel and go down.

Mr. TURKEL. In order to answer that question, Mr. Rohrabacher, we have to look at the political history of the Uighurs, and philosophy of the Uighurs and culture of the Uighurs. Historically, Uighurs had twice established a secular republic. First time in 1933, second time in 1944. Both of those republics were established or led by very religious leaders. The president of the first republic was the person who translated Koran into Uighur, and yet, he embraced the republican system of government rather than establishing a Sharia Law-based society or country. He thought all the Turks, Turkey is a good example to follow.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Okay. Is that what people today, the leadership and various people in that area, believe today as well?

Mr. TURKEL. I believe that tradition continues because the vast majority of the Uighurs believe the best way to run a healthy society or healthy government is to separate religion from the politics.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Okay.

Mr. TURKEL. They believe in the secular nature of the society. Also, in the second republic in 1944, the President, Elihan Tore, himself is a very religious person, and yet, he formed secular, diverse government which included even Han Chinese.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Okay. Yes. What is your reaction to these charges?

Ms. GAER. Thank you. Well, first of all, I can't say that we have any information about the 17 specifically and any views that they have. I suppose when they get to be released, whether it is in Palau or elsewhere, we will have an opportunity to ask those questions. As far as Uighur Muslims, and the Uighur culture and reli-

gious expression, we have a population here that is trying to express Islam as they know it in a situation which is very hostile to it.

When you go into mosques and see signs that say who can and who can't be there displayed visibly, when you see schools being retreaded by Communist officials who have little sympathy for religion at all, you understand that they are struggling for certain basic rights as, really, just people. There was no discussion whatsoever of Sharia Law as a desire among any of the imams, religious officials or others that we met with in Kashgar or in that region.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Okay. All right. That is a good. Ms. Kadeer?

Mrs. KADEER. The Chinese Government has been aggressively portraying and demonizing as Uighurs displeasure with the Chinese Government rule as terrorism and also Islamic radicalism, but in my more than 60 years of life, the only time I realized about the existence of such terrorism is because of the 9/11 and the things happen on that tragic day. Later, we learned some of the Uighurs went to Afghanistan. Then we learn about the so-called organization called the East Turkistan Islamic Movement. Recently, we also saw some of the video footage put out by another organization purporting to represent the Uighurs.

What is shocking to us is we are not aware of who these people are, and also, they appear on YouTube at the critical juncture, especially when there is a serious discussion about potentially releasing the Uighurs at Guantanamo or when we, the World Uighur Congress, have something major, important events, they appear on YouTube. These people appear on YouTube and they all slander all our supporters in the west and all the people that support the Uighur people's peaceful struggle.

So Uighur people are very delighted to have the support of the western democracies. Also, throughout my life I haven't seen like Uighurs like that who appear on YouTube making that kind of outrageous claims or statements. So we have questions about the backgrounds of those people and as to why they are making those statements.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Okay. Let me just be very specific about this. So it is your testimony to us today that the Uighur peoples are not struggling in order to create a society based on Sharia Law but more on a society based on freedom for the people to worship God as they see fit.

Mrs. KADEER. That is the wish of all the Uighur people, not to have this Sharia Law-based Islamic state, but rather freedom of religion for all and a democratic state. That is why the Uighur people chose a woman like me to be their leader.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Right. Have you ever been asked, have people insisted that you cover your body in the way that they insist in Sharia Law countries?

Mrs. KADEER. No, nobody asked me and they don't even ask me to wear that. There is no coercion among the Uighur people. The Uighur people are very freedom loving, they are very jolly, happy people. They love music, they love singing, and we are hearing this kind of negative propaganda only because of the Chinese Government's role in demonizing the Uighur people. Then we see in some

of the western media portraying us as this fundamental extremist people.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Unfortunately, there have been some anti-Communists who have been parodying this charge without looking into it and it is very important that we are on the record about this today, this specific issue. Ms. Abramson, what about you? Have you discovered in your studies an intonation toward establishing a Sharia Law-based state in that part of the world?

Ms. ABRAMSON. So what I have seen in looking at Uighur history and Uighur religious practices, Uighurs have practiced a form of Islam that has been influenced by Sufi practices. It contains a lot of features that, say, al-Qaeda would rally against. So this is the type of religion, type of religious practice that is very different from the charges, the type that you described. I do think that the charges that you described have gained some currency because the Chinese Government has been so vigorous in painting the Uighurs as "extremists" and people who engage in "illegal religious activity."

So I think it is useful for just a second to take a look at what that means. Basically, that can mean anything outside of the tightly controlled, narrow space for Chinese Government state approved religious activity, including, say, holding an unauthorized religious class for children. So this is what gets painted as "illegal religious activity" or can be described as "extremism."

So that people can get a better sense of what this means, I would just like to refer listeners, everyone here in the room, to the Congressional-Executive Commission on China's political prisoner database which contains cases of Uighurs imprisoned for exercising their fundamental right to freedom of religion.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. The charges that are being brought up and trying to create a false impression are basically that what we have here is just the making of another radical Islamic state, and so I find what the panel is saying, that that charge is just, and correct me if I am wrong, totally wrong, and false and probably the product of Communist Chinese propaganda.

Ms. ABRAMSON. We certainly haven't seen evidence of it.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. All right. With that, I will ask some more questions later on but I will yield back to my chairman.

Mr. DELAHUNT [presiding]. We are joined by the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Poe. Mr. Poe, we will give you your opportunity now to inquire of the panel.

Mr. POE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It seems to me that our foreign policy treats different folks different ways. You know, the Chinese Government is our economic buddies, so because they are our buddies, we don't criticize them as much as we will, you know, the North Koreans, or the Iranians, for God's sake. Because they control our debt, and who would have thought they are now going to be making Hummers, we treat them different as a nation. So personally I am somewhat skeptical about what the government says about what is taking place in China, our Government, and I don't trust anything the Chinese Government says about the way they treat their own people.

So my concern is we have got to cut through the chase and figure out exactly what is taking place. The Uighurs that are in Guanta-

namo Bay prison, it bothers me that since that is supposedly our prison we let any foreign country come in there and talk to what now they claim are their nationals, whether it is China or any other nation. So the President has announced Guantanamo Bay prison is going to close. What do we do with the Uighurs? Who wants to tell me what to do with them?

Mr. DELAHUNT. Would the gentleman yield for a moment?

Mr. POE. Certainly.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I don't know if you are aware but there was an announcement very early this morning that the nation of Palau, and I know you visited there——

Mr. POE. That near Texas?

Mr. DELAHUNT. It is west of Texas. Let me just leave it like that. Has agreed to take the 17 Uighurs that are detained there. I have had an opportunity to discuss with my ranking member where do we go from here? I think you know both of us, and I think you know that we have very divergent views, but at the same time, I believe it is important to proceed to investigate how those who are currently there, and those that were there previously, arrived there, how they were screened and what information did the United States rely on in terms of detaining them?

I have acknowledged that the Bush administration did clear them, declared them to be noncombatants and not a threat to the United States, and that was obviously a decision that was rendered recently by a Federal District Court, but I think that I am accurate when I say that the ranking member and myself are concerned that our Government has relied on intelligence coming from the Chinese to make decisions. Some of our colleagues have expressed grave concerns about releasing the Uighurs into the United States. Well, that is not going to happen.

I hope that their statements are not based upon information coming from the Chinese intelligence services. I am concerned that some of us have been duped by the Chinese Communists. I think it is very important that we take the case of the Uighurs and now that it is moot in terms of what we are going to do with them that we find out what happened. I don't know if you are aware, Ted, but both myself and Mr. Rohrabacher did request to go to Guantanamo and interview the Uighurs detainees.

We had secured the consent of their attorneys. Their attorneys felt very comfortable in having their clients release them so that Mr. Rohrabacher, and myself and our staffs could go and interview them. We were denied, but we have discovered that in I think it was the year 2003 that Chinese Communist intelligence agents were allowed access to the Uighur detainees.

There is also some evidence that indicated that not only were they interrogated, but they were threatened. That simply cannot stand. If that is accurate, we should take lessons as we move forward on the issue of Guantanamo. I yield back. I thank the gentleman for giving me some of his time.

Mr. POE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As you said, and you may recall that in one of our Foreign Affairs Committees I volunteered to accompany you to Guantanamo Bay prison to visit them as well, and it is unfortunate that our own Government denies Members of

Congress access to those prisoners when they will let foreign governments come in and interview those prisoners.

Mr. DELAHUNT. The gentleman will further yield?

Mr. POE. Yes.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I am willing to go to Palau and have a conversation with the Uighurs somewhere in the South Pacific. If the gentleman wants to accompany myself and Mr. Rohrabacher, I think that we can get the truth out because I have had a conversation with their attorneys and the version that is being echoed here in the United States right in the halls of Congress I suspect is absolutely false and is reflective of intelligence that had been provided to the United States Government by the Chinese, by the Communist Chinese, not by independent sources. I yield back.

Mr. POE. Reclaiming my time. That is really my biggest concern is that we are basing American foreign policy decisions upon what the Chinese Government tells us. That should be highly suspect, but because they are our trading partners, you know, we will accept their word when other people who don't have an economic tie to the United States, we reject what they say.

The only way we are going to get to the truth about all of this is I think Congress has an obligation to find out exactly what is taking place. China's history of human rights is a problem when their now young people deny that even Tiananmen Square took place 20 years ago because their own country is telling them that never happened. I think human rights, if we are for human rights, we ought to be concerned about human rights, even with our economic buddies. So I will yield back the remainder of my time, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I thank the gentleman. There has been a reference to a purported act by one of the Guantanamo detainees that that individual smashed a TV set because the presentation on the television involved a woman with bare arms. Now, I give you that because that appears to be some evidence that is being offered by some here in Washington that the Uighurs represent an extreme version of Islam. I put the question to the panel. Let me start with Mr. Turkel. Is that something that the version of Islam that is practiced by the Uighur community would find so repugnant that an individual would throw a TV set against the wall?

Mr. TURKEL. Congressman, I appreciate that question. First of all, that incident is not what it is being described in L.A. Times. That is an almost 3 years old incident. It has nothing to do with, as far as I know, a woman bare arm. I wasn't at Guantanamo when that story broke out 3 years ago. The thing about the Uighur person not being tolerant for a woman in the modern attire is absurd at best. The Uighurs are very secular, open and modern people.

The Uighur woman plays a dominant role in the Uighur society, and family, and business. Even politics. We have a Uighur female leader sitting with us in here. So that story does not have any factual backing, as far as I know, for a couple of reasons. One, the Uighurs don't have such a culture of not being tolerant to a woman who is in modern attire. The second is the TV is still there. It is not a real TV, it is a combo.

If it is still the same TV, I have seen that TV. It is a combo. It does not hook up with cable. They play some Animal Planet or some Harry Potter movies. It is not a regular TV that you watch and flip channels. That does not reflect the true nature of the Uighur people.

Mr. DELAHUNT. You mentioned, Nury, and I am just want to have repeat because Mr. Rohrabacher elicited the answer but I think it is worth repeating because there is so much misinformation that exists because it gets repeated again, and again, and again and it gets amplified. It is the technique, if you will, of the big lie. I will start with you and ask everyone else again the question, and you mention it in your statement, that the Uighur people do not seek to create a state based on Sharia Law. Is that accurate, and is that your opinion? Let me proceed down the line.

Mr. TURKEL. That is not an accurate description of the Uighurs' ultimate goal. It is not only false, but it is invented just because the Uighurs happen to be Muslim and they should carry the hat of others who wanted to fighting for that goal. Uighurs wanted to be treated like a human being. Uighurs' struggle is one for national existence and national survival. It has nothing to do with setting up or establishing a Sharia Law-based society. There is no historic probe, there is no cultural support or no philosophical support to prove that invented claim.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Ms. Gaer?

Ms. GAER. Well, I have said before that our understanding is that the basic aim of most Uighur Muslims is to try to practice religion peacefully and normally. Now, we don't know the particulars of this television case or anything else like that. I don't think people should be destroying government property or even threatening to do that, but we don't know the particulars of that case or not. Individual, what a particular individual does or doesn't espouse doesn't necessarily mean a whole people espouse it.

So whether or not there is anything to it, to make the claim from that that all Uighurs therefore want some form of radical Islam seems to me to be a gross leap, at a minimum, logical and factual.

In that context, however, there has been a lot of discussion among experts about the fact that repression breeds radicalization, and that Chinese repression of religion to the degree that we have described to you—where everyone is watched, where you can pray, what you can say, where you can go and when is so carefully monitored that in a situation like that, repression breeds radicalization. That is one of the worries we have to be watching for. That is one of the strongest reasons for the Chinese to ease up.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Ms. Kadeer?

Mrs. KADEER. First of all, to clarify is the Uighur people's struggle between the Chinese state, this is not based upon religion. It is also a fact that after China's military takeover of east Turkistan in 1949 and the establishment of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region in 1955 the Uighur people have really not enjoyed a day of peace under CCP rule.

One thing I would like to cite is that Xinjiang's Chief Justice, his name is Rozi Ismail, on January 18, 2008, he declared at one of the judicial conferences that during the previous 5 years the local authorities actually arrest more than 15,000 people relates on secu-

rity and terrorism charges. Also, during pre and after Olympic period, the Chinese authorities also arrest more than 1,300 Uighurs. So as result, so many Uighurs suffering. In fact, many of us here, our relatives, are languishing in Chinese prisons or suffering in many ways.

This kind of suffering continues. As you know, there is no due process. Uighurs can never hire attorneys to defend the charges under Chinese judicial system, and the Chinese authorities imprison detainee and execute Uighurs for simply expressing their wish. So we just happen to be a people who believe in Islam.

Unlike other groups, we suffer under the same authority and regime in Beijing, but it is just because of our religious affiliation where our peaceful struggle, legitimate aspirations, have been demonized successfully by the Chinese authorities and to some extent, unfortunately, accepted by some countries, and even the media, to be very cautious about the way we peacefully struggle for our freedoms and rights. Just as Tibetans, we are struggling in the precise same thing.

So our struggle is not religious struggle. We are not seeking a religious state. Our struggle is precise, like the Tibetans, all the other people who are suffering. We want freedom. Yes. We did talk about religious persecution and our demand for religious freedom, but that is not what inspires us to peacefully struggle.

Which groups of their, you know, unmarried young woman, ages from 15 to 25, could be just easily transferred to eastern part of China like hundreds of thousands of them? Which people wouldn't, you know, express displeasure to that kind of policy? So who and which people wouldn't stand up for their rights under this kind of six decade long repression? So thank you for listening to what I had to say. With regard to Guantanamo, just one comment. As long as the Uighurs at Guantanamo are released and relocated, resettled in a western democracy, we are happy. As long as they are not sent back to China. Thank you.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Ms. Abramson?

Ms. ABRAMSON. Well, the other panelists, I think, have articulated it quite nicely. I would simply add in terms of the question of Islam as how it is practiced in Xinjiang and the role of women, women have played a prominent role, of course, in the social life of the Uighurs, and Ms. Kadeer is of course strong evidence of that, as others have noted, but also, women have played a prominent role in the religious life of the Uighurs, and so I think that can help answer the question as well.

Mr. DELAHUNT. What would the view be, Ms. Abramson, of those who are followers of al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden in terms of the form of Islam practiced by the Uighurs in China?

Ms. ABRAMSON. Yes. The form of Islam as practiced inside of Xinjiang contains a lot of features that al-Qaeda would, I think, be opposed to, would rally against. So it is, for instance, traditional forms of Islam in the region have been influenced by Sufi mysticism, by pre-Islamic traditions, and so these are things that would be opposed by al-Qaeda and similar groups.

Mr. DELAHUNT. They would consider the form practiced by the Sufis of the Uighur community as being an apostate practice, if you will.

Ms. ABRAMSON. I think that could certainly be likely. Yes.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Right. So there is no connection?

Ms. ABRAMSON. None that I have seen. None that our commission has observed.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Chairman, if you would indulge me one moment?

Mr. DELAHUNT. Of course.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. You made several points today about the influence that China, the Chinese dictatorship, is having on American policy. I think that may be, there are two elements coming out of this hearing that I think are of great concern to moral people. Number one is the treatment of the 17 individual Uighurs at Guantanamo. That is number one. That is a moral issue. The second issue that I think is being raised is perhaps their plight is reflected in a manipulation of American policy by the Communist Chinese dictatorship.

Let me just note for the record that one of the witnesses that was called for this hearing and that we would hope would have appeared bowed out of an agreement to come here to testify today for fear of retribution by the Communist Chinese.

So this threat to freedom and this threat that we are trying to recognize today to America, and development of our own policy can be felt right here in this hearing room today as we give our foreign policy about Korea over to the Communist Chinese regime, as we make sure that we don't say anything about Tibet and repression of their people in Tibet, we hesitate to do that because of fear of alienating the regime in Beijing. We have felt that same type of influence right here in this hearing room.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Reclaiming my time. I think it is important to note that until today's announcement, and I am not sure, again, that it has been confirmed fully by our own Government, but the difficulty that the United States had in terms of finding a suitable venue for the resettlement of the Uighurs, who, according to our system of justice are free to go, was extremely difficult because other nations, including western democracies, were profoundly concerned about the reaction of the Communist Chinese Government.

I think what we are learning is the influence and the power that goes far beyond just this simple issue, Mr. Rohrabacher, and it is not a simple issue. Let me pose a question to Mr. Turkel and Ms. Kadeer. If Speaker Gingrich had his way and the 17 Uighurs had been returned to China, what would their fate have been in your opinion?

Mr. TURKEL. I appreciate that question. It will be equivalent of giving a one way ticket to death. As I stated in my testimony, the Uighur region according to various human rights reports, the only region in China where people would face death penalty for political offenses. The Guantanamo Uighurs ultimately stated that they have a philosophical animosity toward communism. That itself is a crime. It is a punishable crime.

Second thing, in relation to that Guantanamo saga that we been working the last several years, I would like to say this on the record, that the Uighurs in Guantanamo not for the danger that they posing against the Americans but for the danger China causes them. The Bush administration State Department publicly stated

that it reach out to over 100 countries and asked them for help and most of them, from what we know, refused or declined to help because of possible damage to its relationship with Communist China.

It looks like the American diplomats trying to book a lunch with the European allies. China has already arranged a fancy dinner with the countries. So that is one possible reason. Speaking of that academic, harassing American experts who specialize in Uighurs, I have been disturbed and very disappointed by our Government's apparent action or silence, not protecting American academics who specialize in Uighur issue.

A few years ago there was a book published by Johns Hopkins University Society School and more than 10 American scholars authored that book and most of them categorically blacklisted by Communist China and they cannot travel to China. Exception to two of them. Any time they were invited to speak at any event, whether it was related to Uighurs or China, they got phone call, from what I know, from the Chinese embassy. You know, they are academics. They need to continue their academic life. The U.S. Government should step up and protect the American academics' freedom of research.

Ironically, United States Government does not apparently bother Chinese Communist academics coming to here and sitting in a classroom writing and criticizing the government. Apparently the Chinese Government another way been very successful harassing and bullying around our academics. I don't think that should be allowed.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Thank you, Nury. Ms. Kadeer, if the Uighur detainees whom some suggested be sent back to China, what do you believe their fate would have been?

Mrs. KADEER. If those Uighurs were returned to China, the first thing I believe the Chinese authorities would do is to torture them until they sign a confession that they committed acts of terrorism, they are terrorists. When I was imprisoned for the first 2 years at the solitary confinement they basically said I had to sign that I did steal China's national and state secrets. They also forced me to appear on a video to state that I stole China's state secrets.

I believe that I was spared from physical torture by the Chinese authorities because of international intervention and involvement of my case, but I did see Chinese prison guards torture Uighurs in front of me in prison. If those 17 Uighurs were returned, they would be tortured and forced to sign a confession, they would be videotaped and shown on TV, then taken for execution. Then they will show the tapes to the U.S. Government and to United Nations to prove that those were terrorists.

Then the Chinese Government will claim now United States is their buddy and ally in the war on terror. If the Uighurs, you know, legitimately stand up to the Chinese Government, they are also enemies of the United States and they will be sent back by the U.S. to us so we can do whatever with the Uighurs ourselves. So I would like to thank the U.S. Government and international human rights groups for saving my life, otherwise I would be long dead in a Chinese prison myself. Thank you.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I would like to pose, and I don't want to go too far astray from the focus of this hearing because, as I said, there will be other hearings, but we are talking about the 17 that have, and are currently, detained. I would like to know if any of you have any information in terms of the five that were previously released and were resettled in Albania. Have they been a source of concern to the Albanians?

Because I have discussed with Mr. Rohrabacher it would be interesting to hear from them via video link from Albania so that the American people, not just pundits and commentators and people who have a particular political agenda, but unfiltered, can hear from them in terms of their experience, and why they fled to begin with and why they were apprehended. I think we ought to explore the issue or the program that I call the bounty program where there is evidence indicating that they were not captured, as the ranking member indicated, on the battlefield by American military but were bought from Pakistanis and Afghanis that received $5,000 in cash.

That would be a princely some, I dare say, in that part of the world. Does anyone have any information regarding those five that went to Albania? By the way, I understand that again the Chinese Communist Government exercised considerable pressure on the Albanians because of that, and I think the Albanian Government ought to be acknowledged for a courageous act.

As I indicated, I think it would be very, very informative for the American people, for Members of Congress to interview those individuals. Let the sun shine in. Let us find out what the facts are. Let us pursue the truth. Nury?

Mr. TURKEL. Yes. I personally have met with all of the five Uighurs who were released into Albania both in Guantanamo and Albania. I visited them several times in prison and went to help them with the settlement matters in Albania. While they were in prison they are strikingly supportive American Government and expressed their support and continues to talk about their admiration.

In fact, one of them, Abu Bakker Qassim, in 2006 wrote an op ed for the New York Times and expressed his admiration for American Government, and American ideals and democracy, particularly for this institution, the United States Congress. For their current life, Abu Bakker is trying to reestablish his life by getting into restaurant business, and the youngest of those five, Ayoub Haji, is currently attending a university which is funded I believe by the State of New York. He speaks fluent English. Sometimes I chat with him on Facebook.

He recently sent me pictures with a group of young ladies bare armed holding them, their arms. As for Adil Hakimjan, that is the gentleman who recently granted asylum in Sweden, Swedish Government, Swedish security officials, issued a testimony affidavit stating that Adil Hakimjan posed no security threat to Swedish society, and thereby, his asylum application has been accepted. These stories speak volume and disproves all invented claims that the Uighurs, whether they are in Guantanamo or in Albania, poses security threat, which is false.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Ms. Kadeer?

Mrs. KADEER. Actually, I got a call from Abu Bakker in Albania recently and during our conversations he basically said, you know, the 17 at Guantanamo are just like us because of their long-term incarceration there, their unjust incarceration there. Of course they are very frustrated, but once they are released we will explain to them how because of the United States that our lives are saved, we were not returned to China so that we can explain to them, you know, what is a situation that now we are alive and working in Albania.

Also, the vice president of the World Uighur Congress, Mr. Askar Jan, he visits them in Tijuana and talked to them, had a very nice conversation as well some time ago. During the conversation the Uighurs in Albania basically told him that. At the moment there are hundreds of thousands of Uighurs, innocent Uighurs are being imprisoned in Chinese prisons. Most of them cannot defend their charges. Many of them are being taken out and executed by the Chinese authorities.

For them, their incarceration is illegal and unjust, and of course they are not happy. Nobody is going to be happy if that person is unjustly imprisoned by any government. If it was not the United States, they may long be sent back to China for execution and they wouldn't be——

Mr. DELAHUNT. They would prefer to be in Guantanamo than in China.

Mrs. KADEER. In a way, yes.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Ms. Gaer?

Ms. GAER. Thank you very much. I have no specific information about the Uighurs who are in Albania but you mentioned in your very kind and generous introduction that I am a member of the U.N. Committee against Torture and its follow-up rapporteur. In a case where individuals are not sent back to a country that is seeking them for prosecution and another country sends them to a third country, it is quite common for the committee to expect the government concerned to do its own follow-up monitoring.

So while you said that you would like to go and see what the situation is in Albania, and that would be a good thing to do, I would submit that the United States Government has an obligation to do its own follow-up and to be prepared to be reporting on that, because for sure they will be asked that the next time they are at the U.N. on this issue.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Thank you. I think it was Nury Turkel that indicated, and maybe it was Ms. Kadeer, that just recently Pakistan returned two Uighur individuals to China.

Mr. TURKEL. Actually, Congressman, it is 10.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Ten.

Mr. TURKEL. Yes, 10 Uighurs. Uighar-American Association I believe issued press release. I would be happy to provide a copy to your office with specific information about that deportation which has been a practice, actually, by Pakistani authorities.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Because of pressure by the Communist Chinese Government?

Mr. TURKEL. Yes. They have very intimate cooperation and working relationship when it comes to Uighurs.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I wonder if the Chinese are providing billions and billions of dollars of support for Pakistan.

Mr. TURKEL. The irony is that the Uighurs pay price, both domestically, internationally, for being a Muslim, and yet, none of the Muslim countries ever speak up against Chinese regression, particularly on the religious freedom issue. On the other hand, they help collaborate. They are an accomplice.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Chairman, I think that is a very significant point because let us just note that so many countries that just say horrible things about the United States of America, and here we have an example, that the prisoners would rather stay in prison in Guantanamo than go back to China, but these other countries that so harshly criticize the United States don't speak up against the brutal repression that is going on in China, even to the point where these people would rather stay in prison than go back to that. Yes. And Muslim countries.

Mr. TURKEL. Specifically, Saudi Arabia. It has huge leverage in its dealing with a Communist state. They put quotas and make it difficult for even Uighurs to go to hadj——

Mr. ROHRABACHER. That is very significant.

Mr. TURKEL [continuing]. Who are physically and financially capable of doing so.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. That is very significant. Thank you for bringing that up.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Do you believe that is as a result of internal concerns because clearly Saudi Arabia has its unique brand or its unique version of Islam? Saudis are Wahabis?

Mr. TURKEL. No, not because of the version of Islam that they practice, but because of the economic and diplomatic influence that——

Mr. DELAHUNT. Of China. Of Communist China.

Mr. TURKEL. Yes. Ms. Kadeer, would you wish to respond?

Mrs. KADEER. Yes. There is a Uighur association in Pakistan. We communicate with them all the time. They basically told us like with regard to the Uighurs recently deported to China by the Pakistani authorities it was more like a tradeoff. It is Uighur association people knew some of the Uighurs were deported back to China.

They said they were just students, some business people here for whatever reason, you know, wanted by the Chinese authorities, put pressure on Pakistan, then Pakistan detained them and deport them to China in exchange for some $700 million military aid. The Uighurs there said it was on their newspaper as well. The Pakistani, in order to get military aid from China, basically upon Chinese demands deporting all those Uighurs back. Thank you.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Well, thank you for that answer. I think, Mr. Rohrabacher, that we should invite the Pakistani ambassador to our office to have a discussion about this particular practice. Ms. Gaer?

Ms. GAER. Well, I just wanted to add to that that when the U.N. Committee against Torture has reviewed Kyrgistan, Uzbekistan, Russia, even other countries in the region, we have found in many cases people have been returned rather casually, when it was clear the individual would be in the hands of the security police in prison and likely to be subjected to torture. These countries haven't fol-

lowed-up. So if you are going to have a conversation with the Pakistanis, I could give you a few other names to add to that list.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Well, Ms. Gaer, Mr. Rohrabacher and I are part of a congressional delegation going to Moscow at the end of this month. We will raise that issue with the Russian authorities and ask them to review their own practices, as well as to communicate with other governments in the region. Ms. Kadeer, you talked about, and we will have a hearing in front of this committee on the ETIM, the so-called terrorist group. We find it interesting that all of a sudden they appeared out of thin air.

Now, you are the leader not just within the diaspora, but among Uighurs worldwide. I think it was your testimony that indicated you had never heard of ETIM until just recently, within the past 6 or 7 years. Can you tell us something about the ETIM? Because we have colleagues that are convinced, and there are scholars, alleged scholars, maybe they get their information from the Chinese intelligence services as well, who speak about the ETIM with some certitude?

Mrs. KADEER. The first time I heard about ETIM was after my release into the United States. It seems the Chinese Government also put this name, aggressively pushing this name, organization on other countries, including INTERPOL. We know some people now on YouTube making outrageous claims, real simply. I really want to investigate who these people are, why they are saying or doing what they are saying, but because we don't have the capacity or the manpower to find out. I am really interested in finding out who these people are.

We have some 51 organizations in the diaspora. We know all of them. We have close working relations with them. All of those organizations, none of them knew who these people are or what is ETIM. We are aware that it seems the Chinese Government linked all the Uighur dissidents overseas, you know, peaceful dissidents, with ETIM and put their names on INTERPOL list so that those people cannot travel in different countries.

Then they can be detained or arrested and deported back to China. So now our concern is the Chinese Government, in addition to the so-called ETIM member list, put our names onto the INTERPOL list as well. So I have deep profound suspicion on this ETIM and what it wants to do.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I want to recognize my friend from the Pacific where it would appear that the Uighurs are heading, to Palau, but what I want to do is, and I don't want to appear to be a conspiracy theorist but the more I am hearing, is it within the realm of possibility that the ETIM is a fiction of the Chinese intelligence services to use as a mechanism to defame Uighurs and, in particular, the detainees at Guantanamo? Mr. Turkel?

Mr. TURKEL. Mr. Chairman, in late summer 2002 I received an email from a friend who is a senior official at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing asking me what do I make of this designation. My response was shock. I said I never heard of this organization. My friend did not believe me because he thinks that I know every single Uighur organization around the world. That shows, I am not signifying my knowledge of the Uighur organization, but that response was pret-

ty common for vast majority of the Uighurs when Deputy Secretary of State Armitage made that announcement in summer of 2002.

To this day, I haven't heard a persuasive reasoning or explanation why ETIM was designated as a terrorist organization. I cannot say that that organization is a fictional or created by the Chinese Government, but its existence, its goals is questionable. I never doubt China Government's ability to create something like that for their own propaganda purposes.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I am going to just go—my colleague is going to leave us. He wants to make a final observation.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I have to run to the floor for this vote and I have some business down there as well, but let me just thank the chairman, thank the panel today. This has been a fascinating and provocative hearing. I would suggest to the chairman that we have criticized certain people who have been on the other side of this issue, both of us have criticized them, for example, former Speaker Gingrich.

I would recommend, and I believe the chairman would be supportive, of perhaps having some of those critics who we criticized here to have an exchange of views and putting them on the record on this issue. So, with that said, let us invite former Speaker Gingrich here to defend some of these things he has been saying.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Gingrich is always welcome in front of this committee.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. All right.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I thank my friend. Let me yield to the gentleman from the Pacific, Mr. Eni Faleomavaega, for any questions he might have. We have got about 8 minutes left.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Chairman, my apologies for being late. I had a mark-up at another committee. I do want to commend you for your leadership in bringing this hearing before our Subcommittee on Human Rights, and especially to have our guests here to testify concerning the status of the Uighur people. I notice with tremendous interest Ms. Kadeer appears to me as some person of strong character, and certainly with that kind of leadership as the mother of the Uighur people, I want to say that I have nothing but admiration and respect for all that she is trying to do on behalf of her people.

I know we have a vote, but I do want to say for the record, Mr. Chairman, I look forward in working with you closely to see what we can do to be of assistance to the Uighur people. In my capacity as chairman of the Asia-Pacific Subcommittee, which also covers this issue, I think we are both members of that, dealing with the officials in the Government of China, I do want to say for the record that I look forward in working with you and also with the leaders and members of the Uighur community concerning this. Again, Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Thank you, Eni. Since it looks like we are running out of time let me express my gratitude for your presence here, for informing us, for educating us. I suspect that we will be inviting each of you back on different occasions because this is something that should not just be dismissed because hopefully the early reports are accurate and the Uighur detainees will leave Guantanamo. I believe there is a lot to learn, and I think it is im-

portant for the American people to understand fully the story of the Uighurs and the Uighur 22 detainees, how they arrived there and what has happened since.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. DELAHUNT. I do.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. I have been to the island of Palau a couple of times. It is a beautiful group of islands. I am very dear friends with the President of Palau, by the way. Hopefully, Mr. Chairman, and maybe at some time in the future we could have a joint hearing.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I think we should. I think we should do a field trip, in fact.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. In fact, we are going to be there. In about 2 months I will be traveling to Palau. So please.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Earlier, Eni, I quoted the words of George Washington who stated that America should always welcome the virtuous and the persecuted, that part of mankind, to our shores. Maybe your friend, President Toribiong, is a new George Washington.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Well, I must say—will the gentleman yield?

Mr. DELAHUNT. Of course.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. When you said something about liberty, I always think of that statue in New York City. I think it is probably the most classic statement about our country welcoming anybody from any part of the world.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Particularly the oppressed.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Yes. So with that, Mr. Chairman, thank you. I look forward in meeting with our friends from Uighur.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I see Ms. Gaer wants to make a quick comment. We are running out of time.

Ms. GAER. It was on your question, Mr. Chairman, about whether ETIM existed or didn't. When we visited China I asked that question. I asked it of State Department officials and I asked it of the Communist Party leadership in the Xinjiang Province that we met with. The answer from the State Department—well, you can ask the State Department. I think it would be very valuable if there were a formal request to the State Department.

Mr. DELAHUNT. You can reveal to us what they said to you.

Ms. GAER. They said there is a serious problem with bombings and terrorism in China, specific organizations. They were not in a position to comment on specific organizations. I think they might comment to you on specific organizations.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Well, thank you. Again, thank you all. It has been an excellent hearing.

[Whereupon, at 11:51 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

Material Submitted for the Hearing Record

SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, HUMAN RIGHTS AND OVERSIGHT

William D. Delahunt (D-MA), Chairman

June 9, 2009

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend the following OPEN hearing of the Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight, to be held in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building:

DATE: Wednesday, June 10, 2009

TIME: 9:00 a.m.

SUBJECT: The Uighurs: A History of Persecution

WITNESSES:

Panel I
Ms. Felice D. Gaer
Chair
U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom

Ms. Kara Miriam Abramson
Advocacy Director
Congressional-Executive Commission on China

Panel II
Mrs. Rebiya Kadeer
President
World Uyghur Congress

Mr. Nury Turkel
Uighur Rights Activist and Attorney

By Direction of the Chairman

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee as noted above

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON *IOHRO* MEETING

Day *Wednesday* Date *06/10/2009* Room *2172*

Starting Time *9:09 A.M.* Ending Time *11:50 A.M.*

Recesses (to)

Presiding Member(s) *Bill Delahunt and Russ Carnahan*

CHECK ALL OF THE FOLLOWING THAT APPLY:

Open Session [✓]
Executive (closed) Session [ ]
Televised [✓]

Electronically Recorded (taped) [✓]
Stenographic Record [✓]

TITLE OF HEARING or BILLS FOR MARKUP: *(Include bill number(s) and title(s) of legislation.)*

The Uighurs: A History of Persecution

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Bill Delahunt, Russ Carnahan, Keith Ellison, Donald Payne, Dana Rohrabacher and Ted Poe.

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: *(Mark with an * if they are not Members of HIRC.)*

Eni F. H. Faleomavaega

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes [✓] No [ ]
(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*

ACTIONS TAKEN DURING THE MARKUP: *(Attach copies of legislation and amendments.)*

RECORDED VOTES TAKEN (FOR MARKUP): *(Attach final vote tally sheet listing each member.)*

Subject	Yeas	Nays	Present	Not Voting

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____
or
TIME ADJOURNED _____

Subcommittee Staff Director