

# URGENT ACTION

## UIGHUR ACTIVIST RELEASED IN BEIJING

**Ilham Tohti, editor of the website Uighur Online and associate economics professor at Central Nationalities University, was released on 23 August in Beijing, China's capital. However, he remains under surveillance.**

**Ilham Tohti** was taken from his home on 8 July, shortly after the authorities said that articles posted on his website had fuelled the violence in Urumqi, capital of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in northwestern China. Ilham Tohti has denied the accusation saying that he would never agree with using violence.

His detention was arbitrary and illegal. In an interview with Radio Free Asia upon his release, Ilham Tohti said that he was not charged with any crime. His lawyer has not received any legal documentation on his detention and he was not held in an official place of detention. It appears that his detention was a move to prevent him from communicating with journalists and through his website and blog.

In the same interview with Radio Free Asia, Ilham Tohti also said that he was not tortured or otherwise ill-treated in detention but that the police questioned him "day and night". Upon release, the police told him not to criticise the government or he would face formal charges and punishment.

On 5 July, demonstrations in the XUAR that are said to have begun peacefully turned violent. According to the authorities, nearly 200 people were killed and over 1,600 injured. Hou Hanmin, the XUAR government spokesperson told Xinhua, a state news agency, that 156 of those killed were "innocent people". They included 134 who are of Han ethnic origin, 11 from the Hui minority, 10 Uighurs and one Manchurian. In the immediate aftermath of the unrest, the Chinese authorities said that they had detained 1,400 people. On 10 August, at the review of China's report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Duan Jielong, the head of China's delegation, stated that 718 people were still detained and that those who had "committed minor offences" had been released. He said that the authorities are holding 83 people under suspicion of "serious crimes", such as murder, arson and robbery, all of which could lead to a death sentence. Overseas Uighur groups have disputed all the official figures putting the number of casualties, injuries and detentions much higher.

**There is no need to take further action on this case. Many thanks to all those who sent appeals.**

This is the first update of UA 194/09 (ASA 17/034/2009). Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA17/034/2009/en>

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