

URGENT ACTION

HEALTH CONCERNS FOR UYGHUR DETAINED FOR DECADE

Ekpar Asat is not just a well-travelled, educated businessman; he is also a Uyghur. And because of this, he has been detained since April 2016, partly incommunicado, while his family has faced significant challenges as they advocate for his release. Finally able to visit him in mid-2025, his family expressed concerns for his physical and mental health. Chinese authorities should urgently end his arbitrary detention and take concrete steps to implement UN recommendations, including the release of all other individuals detained solely because of their ethnicity, language, religious belief or expression.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Chen Xiaojiang 陈小江

Secretary-General, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Committee
2 Jiankang Lu, Urumqi 830002
Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region
People's Republic of China

Dear Secretary-General Chen,

I am writing to express my grave concern for Uyghur tech entrepreneur **Ekpar Asat (阿克拜尔·艾赛提)**, who was taken into custody nearly a decade ago by Chinese authorities and, according to your government, tried and convicted of "inciting ethnic hatred and ethnic discrimination". He is reportedly serving a 15-year sentence, but his family has never yet received court documents attesting to his trial, and whether he was provided with a lawyer.

It is distressing to learn that his detention and imprisonment in Aksu Prison have been marked by concerns about the conditions and treatment he faces, which appear to fall short of the standards set out in international human rights standards. For example, his family has reported that from January 2019 to at least 2021, he was held in solitary confinement. The first video conversation his family had with him, in January 2021, raised serious concerns about his health, including lack of sunlight exposure and malnutrition and lack of access to adequate medical care.

In mid-2025, for the first time, Ekpar's family was able to make the arduous 12-hour journey from their home to visit Aksu Prison. His sister, Rayhan Asat, is more concerned than ever that the imprisonment is having serious impacts on his physical and mental health.

I therefore call on you to:

- **Release Ekpar Asat immediately and provide him with compensation for his decade-long ordeal, as set out by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention in their Opinion 88/2022 finding his detention arbitrary and in contravention of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;**
- **Ensure that, pending his immediate release, Ekpar Asat is treated in full accordance with the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), and specifically he is not subject to torture or other ill-treatment, including poor conditions of detention, inadequate food and health care and prolonged solitary confinement; and**
- **Transfer Ekpar Asat from Aksu Prison to a prison in Urumqi, and ensure he has regular, unrestricted access to a lawyer of his choice and his family.**

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ekpar Asat is a Uyghur tech entrepreneur, media founder and philanthropist dedicated to helping older people and children with disabilities. He founded a popular social media app that featured information on a variety of current affairs and cultural topics. He went missing in April 2016, after which he was later convicted without any known trial on charges of “inciting ethnic hatred and ethnic discrimination” (煽动民族仇恨, 民族歧视) and allegedly sentenced to 15 years in prison. According to his family, they only found out about the trial through communications between the Chinese authorities and a few US senators in December 2019 and January 2020. He is currently detained in a prison in Xinjiang’s Aksu Prefecture.

Ekpar Asat was finally able to communicate with his family in January 2021 for the first time since 2016. Based on this communication, his family reported that his health appeared to have deteriorated. During the three-minute video conversation with his family members in late January 2021, he was seen to have lost a lot of weight and looked pale with black spots on his face. He told his family members that his health was declining both physically and mentally. The 2025 visit to Aksu Prison was an important moment for the family, but there are concerns that the distance and cost of the travel may preclude regular visits – even where those are in principle guaranteed by the Chinese authorities.

About Xinjiang/the Uyghur Region

Xinjiang is one of the most ethnically diverse regions in China. More than half of the region’s population of 22 million people belong to mostly Turkic and predominantly Muslim ethnic groups, including Uyghurs (around 11.3 million), Kazakhs (around 1.6 million) and other populations whose languages, cultures and ways of life vary distinctly from those of the Han ethnic group, who comprise the vast majority of the population in the rest of China.

Since 2017, under the guise of a campaign against “terrorism” and “religious extremism”, the Chinese authorities have carried out massive and systematic abuses against Muslims living in Xinjiang. It is estimated that over a million people have been arbitrarily detained in internment camps throughout Xinjiang since 2017, under vague definitions of extremism that have allowed for widespread targeting of individuals who peacefully express their cultural identity. In 2021, Amnesty International found China to have committed at least the crimes against humanity of torture, imprisonment and persecution against Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang, alongside other serious human rights violations.

In August 2022, the OHCHR released a long-awaited report complementing those findings and stating that the Chinese authorities’ arbitrary and discriminatory detention and treatment of Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other predominantly Muslim groups in Xinjiang may constitute crimes under international law, in particular crimes against humanity. In August 2024, marking two years since their report was published, the OHCHR issued a statement emphasising that “many problematic laws and policies remain in place” in China, despite their clear concerns and concrete recommendations.

Most recently, in his February 2026 Oral Update to the Human Rights Council, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights called on Chinese authorities to “stop using vague criminal, administrative and national security provisions to suppress the peaceful exercise of fundamental rights... and to release all those arbitrarily detained.” He added that he “regretted the lack of follow-up by the authorities on previous recommendations and on accountability, to protect the rights of Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang, and of Tibetans in their regions.”

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English, Uyghur, Chinese. You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 1 November 2026. Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Ekpar Asat (he/him)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa17/4022/2021/en/>