

AI Index: PRE 01/333/2011  
04 July 2011

## **China: Authorities grow bolder in Uighur crackdown**

Two years on from riots and mass arrests in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, Amnesty International has warned that the Chinese authorities continue to silence those speaking out on abuses during and after the unrest.

Hundreds of people were detained and prosecuted following the riots, with several dozen sentenced to death or executed and hundreds detained, with many of these sentenced to long prison terms.

Managers of well known Uighur websites and journalists have been jailed for involvement in posting messages announcing the protests, or for talking to foreign media.

Uighur asylum seeker Ershidin Israil was recently forcibly returned from Kazakhstan to China amid reported pressure from the Chinese authorities. He had been recently interviewed by Radio Free Asia about the alleged torture and death in custody of a young Uighur man in the aftermath of the protests.

"The government is not only still muzzling people who speak out about July 2009, it is using its influence outside its borders to shut them up," said Sam Zarifi, Amnesty International's Director for the Asia-Pacific.

"The general trend towards repression that we see all over China is particularly pronounced in Xinjiang, where the Uighur population has become a minority in its own homeland."

On 5 July 2009 a protest in the regional capital Urumqi against perceived Chinese government inaction over the death of a Uighur factory worker in southern China, turned to ethnic rioting following police violence against demonstrators.

The unrest was followed by numerous reports of enforced disappearances, and torture in detention. The government is still arresting those who reveal human rights abuses that took place during and after the protests.

Dozens of people have reportedly been detained and ill-treated in connection with the revelation of the alleged death in custody reported to Radio Free Asia.

"Attacking every Uighur who speaks freely is no way to resolve the underlying grievances that led to the 2009 protests in the first place," said Sam Zarifi. "The Chinese government has to listen to the grievances of the Uighur community and address their demands to have their rights respected and their culture protected."

Memetjan Abdulla, a prominent state radio broadcaster is serving a life sentence for posting a protest notice on the Uighur website Salkin. Tursanjan Hezim and Dilshat Paerhat, both former web editors of well-known Uighur websites that reportedly posted protest notices, are serving seven and five years sentences respectively.

Hairat Niyaz, a Uighur journalist and website editor previously seen as pro-government, is serving a 15-year sentence on charges of “endangering state security” for essays he had written and interviews he gave to Hong Kong journalists following the July 2009 protests.

The Chinese authorities blamed overseas agitators for planning, directing and instigating the July 2009 unrest, without presenting evidence. According to official figures, 197 died in the course of the violence, the vast majority of them Han Chinese.

Eye witness accounts presented by Amnesty International in its 2010 report, ‘Justice, justice’: The July 2009 protests in Xinjiang, China, cast doubt on the official version of events, and point to unnecessary or excessive use of force by police against Uighur protesters including beatings, use of tear gas and shooting directly into crowds.