

URGENT ACTION

CHINESE UIGHUR WEBSITE EDITOR SENTENCED

Dilshat Paerhat (or, using the Chinese transliteration, Dilixiati Paerhati), an ethnic Uighur and editor of a Uighur-language website, was sentenced to five years' imprisonment on 21 July for "endangering state security". He is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for exercising his right to peaceful freedom of expression, and is at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

Dilshat Paerhat, editor of a website called Diyarim, was tried by the Intermediate People's Court in the city of Urumqi, the capital of China's Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR). Two other men who run Uighur-language websites were tried and convicted on the same day, also for "endangering state security". They were all tried separately. Nureli, who administered a website called Salkin, was sentenced to five years' imprisonment, and Nijat Azat, who ran a website called Shabnam, was given an eight-year prison sentence. There is little further information on their cases.

Dilshat Paerhat was taken away from his home in Urumqi on 7 August 2009 by unidentified men. His family have not been able to meet him since, and it is not known where he is imprisoned.

During the trial, Dilshat Paerhat was represented by a court-appointed lawyer. Dilshat Paerhat told the court that he had not broken any laws and was just doing his job. It is unclear whether he will appeal against the judgment.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Chinese, English or your own language (please continue to use the Chinese transliteration, Dilixiati Paerhati, in your appeals to the authorities):

- Urging the authorities to release Dilixiati Paerhati immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience;
- Calling on them to reveal his whereabouts immediately, and guarantee that Dilixiati Paerhati will not be tortured or otherwise ill-treated;
- Calling on them to ensure that he is given immediate access to legal counsel of his choice, his family and any medical attention he may require.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 13 SEPTEMBER 2010 TO:

Director General, XUAR Department of Justice

USOUR Abuliz Tingzhang,
Xinjiang Weiwuer Zizhiqu Sifating,
27 Renminlu, Urumqi 830002,
Xinjiang Weiwuer Zizhiqu,
People's Republic of China,

Fax: +86 991 2311590

Salutation: Dear Director General

Chairman of the XUAR People's Government

Nur BEKRI Zhuxi
Xinjiang Weiwuer Zizhiqu Renmin
Zhengfu Bangongting
2 Zhongshanlu
Urumqi 830041

Xinjiang Weiwuer Zizhiqu
People's Republic of China

Fax: +86 991 2817567 or 2803621

Email: master@xinjiang.gov.cn

Salutation: Dear Chairman

Premier of the People's Republic of China

WEN Jiabao Guojia Zongli
The State Council General Office
2 Fuyoujie
Xichengqu
Beijingshi 100017

People's Republic of China

Fax: +86 10 65961109 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA: 262/09 (ASA 17/056/2009, 30 September 2009). Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA17/056/2009/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 5 July 2009, a police crackdown on an initially peaceful demonstration by Uighurs in Urumqi was followed by violent riots. The initial demonstration was in reaction to authorities' perceived inaction following the death of at least two Uighur workers after a riot at a factory in Shaoguan, in the province of Guangdong, on 26 June. According to the official figures, nearly 200 people died in the violence in July in the XUAR, the majority of them "innocent Han Chinese killed by angry mobs," and over 1,700 were injured.

However, eyewitnesses interviewed by Amnesty International report human rights violations that occurred during and in the aftermath of the 5 July protests and riots. These include beatings, arrests and shootings by the security forces to disperse peaceful protesters and the unnecessary or excessive use of force, including lethal force, in the process of restoring order. The evening of 5 July and the following days and weeks also saw widespread arbitrary detentions, torture and other ill-treatment of detainees, enforced disappearances, and unfair trials, in violation of international human rights law and standards.

The initially peaceful demonstration at Urumqi's People's Square on 5 July, had been announced a few days earlier on Uighur websites including Salkin and Diyarim. In addition to websites, information about the demonstration was circulated on QQ, an instant messaging service in China, and via SMS. The Chinese authorities cut internet access in the XUAR during the night of 5-6 July 2009. According to Li Zhi, the then Chinese Communist Party secretary in Urumqi, this was "to quench the riot quickly and prevent violence from spreading to other places". SMS and international telephone services were also cut.

Access to internet was gradually restored in the region with email facilities partially restored in February 2010 and internet access "fully" restored on 14 May 2010. However, internet access in the XUAR, like elsewhere in China, is still far from free since the government censors the internet, blocks certain sites and monitors individuals' activities online.

On 27 September 2009 the XUAR Regional People's Congress Standing Committee issued new regulations that explicitly forbade the use of the internet to "endanger state security" or "instigate ethnic separatism". In March 2010, XUAR delegate to China's legislature the National People's Congress called for a further tightening of controls over the internet "so it won't be used by criminals as a tool of communication". China's Criminal Law already includes provisions on "endangering state security", which include "subversion of state power", "splittism" and "leaking state secrets". Over recent years the authorities have increasingly used these vaguely-worded provisions to silence and imprison peaceful activists and to curtail freedom of expression.

According to the Dui Hua Foundation, an NGO based in San Francisco, trials of Uighur defendants have accounted for two-thirds of all "endangering state security" case in China since the early 2000s. In January 2010, the president of the Higher People's Court in the XUAR, Rozi Ismael, said that in 2009, courts throughout the region handled a total of 437 cases of "endangering state security", compared with 268 such cases in 2008. The publicly available statistics do not reveal how many individuals were involved in the cases.

In April, Gulmira Imin (f), a regular contributor to Salkin, was sentenced to life imprisonment, and on 23 July, Hairat Niyaz, a journalist who administered another website called Uighurbiz was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment, also for "endangering state security".

For more information see Amnesty International report "Justice, Justice": The July 2009 protests in Xinjiang, China: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA17/027/2010/en>, and Urgent Action update Journalist sentenced to 15 years in prison: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA17/030/2010/en>.

Further information on UA: 262/09 Index: ASA 17/033/2010 Issue Date: 02 August 2010

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