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China: prominent Uighur businesswoman arbitrarily detained

Rebiya Kadeer, a well known Uighur businesswoman detained last week in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR), is being held for “providing information to foreigners” or “people outside the borders”, according to information which reached her family at the weekend, Amnesty International said today.

Her son, Ablikim Abdiryim, is reportedly being held on the same charge. It is not known whether they have been formally charged. Rebiya Kadeer's secretary, Kahrیمان Abdukirim, was also detained.

"It appears as though the accusations against Rebiya Kadeer and her son Ablikim Abdiryim may relate to her attempts to meet a visiting group from the US Congressional Research Service and her communications with her husband Sidik Rouzi, a former political prisoner in the XUAR," Amnesty International said.

Sidik Rouzi, a resident in the USA since 1996 has publicly criticized China for its treatment of the Uighurs - the majority Muslim ethnic group in the XUAR.

"Rebiya Kadeer, Ablikim Abdiryim and Kahrیمان Abdukirim must be released immediately and unconditionally," Amnesty International said.

It is believed that Rebiya Kadeer is being held at Liudaowan jail in Urumqi, notorious for its torture and ill-treatment of prisoners. Both Ablikim Abdiryim and Kahrیمان Abdukirim are reportedly being held in the Urumqi Public Security school jail.

Since 1997, Rebiya Kadeer had suffered police harassment and travel restrictions -- including confiscation of her passport -- apparently in connection with her husband's activities abroad, as well as her own attempts to promote the advancement of Uighur women by forming the "Thousand Mothers Movement" encouraging Uighur women to run their own businesses.*

Background

Rebiya Kadeer, known in China as the “millionaire woman of Xinjiang”, was detained by police on 11 August together with a photographer, an interpreter and another woman on their way to the

Yingdu Hotel in Urumqi, the capital of the XUAR, to meet a group from the US Congressional Research Service.

Two of her sons, Ablikim Abdiryim and Alim Abdiryim, and her secretary, Kahriman Abdukirim who had just been released from eight months incommunicado detention,* were taken into police custody the next day. All except Rebiya Kadeer, her son Ablikim Abdiryim and Kahriman Abdukirim were released between 12 and 14 August.

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*For further information please see Amnesty International's report "*People's Republic of China - Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region: Appeal for Uighurs arbitrarily detained*" (AI Index: ASA 17/02/99), issued in January 1999 or call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 171 413 5566. Alternatively you can visit www.amnesty.org.