

US Sanctions Chinese Officials for Repression of Uyghurs

By AFP, MARCH 22, 2022

Washington — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced new visa restrictions on Chinese officials Monday for their actions to repress ethnic and religious minorities both inside and outside the country. In a statement, which provided no specific details on which officials would be targeted with the new sanctions, Blinken also reiterated a call for China to “end its ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity” in the northwestern region of Xinjiang.



A screengrab from video uploaded to YouTube by an anonymous poster on September 17, 2019 shows what an Australian analyst says are Uyghur Muslim detainees being handled by Chinese authorities at a train station in East Turkistan in August 2018.

Xinjiang is in the grip of a years-long “anti-terrorism” campaign that has seen more than a million Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities detained in a sprawling network of “re-education” camps, according to rights

groups.

Blinken noted that the visa restrictions would be focused on Chinese officials complicit in policies aimed at repressing religious and ethnic minorities, as well as other dissidents, human rights activists and journalists.

According to the U.S. State Department, the actions by Chinese officials extended outside China’s borders, including into the United States.

“The United States rejects efforts by PRC (People’s Republic of China) officials to harass, intimidate, surveil, and abduct members of ethnic and religious minority groups, including those who seek safety abroad, and U.S. citizens, who speak out on behalf of these vulnerable populations,” Blinken said.

“We again call on the PRC government to cease its acts of transnational repression, including attempting to silence Uyghur American activists and other Uyghur individuals serving the American people by denying exit permission to their family members in China,” he added.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin on Tuesday

slammed the U.S. move, saying Blinken's statement was full of "political lies... and groundlessly suppresses Chinese officials." "China firmly opposes this," Wang said, urging Washington to immediately revoke the sanctions. "Otherwise, China will respond with recipro-

cal countermeasures," he said without offering details.

The new actions come only a few days after President Joe Biden held a video call with Chinese leader Xi Jinping, in which the U.S. president sought to pressure Xi to not provide support for Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Turkey Calls for Joint Stance to Ease Sufferings of Muslims

By Yeni Safak, March 22, 2022



Turkish foreign minister Mevlut Cavusoglu

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Muslim bloc OIC should act as single identity to help protect rights of Muslim communities across world, Foreign Minister Cavusoglu says

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The Turkish foreign minister on Tuesday called for collective efforts to protect the rights of Muslims and ease the sufferings they face across the globe, including in Palestine, Kashmir, and Cyprus.

Addressing the Islamabad meeting of foreign ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Mevlut Cavusoglu touched upon a string of simmering issues ranging from Islamophobia to the plight of Uyghur Muslims and from the war in Ukraine to the Palestine conflict.

The OIC, he said, exists for a common cause, and, it is only when the Muslim bloc acts as a single identity that it helps protect the rights of subjugated Muslim communities in different parts of the world.

It is “war, terror, pain, and suffering” that come out of the seven-decade occupation of Jerusalem, Cavusoglu stated.

He also said Muslim Turks in Cyprus have been denied their fundamental rights for five decades, as well as “Mus-

lim brothers and sisters” in Indian-administered Kashmir.

Drawing to the plight of Uyghur Muslims in China’s Xinjiang province, Cavusoglu said the persecuted Muslim community should not be left alone just because “you have differences with Turkey.”

“In China, Uyghur Turks and other Muslims are having difficulties in protecting their cultural identity and rights,” he said.

Citing a saying of Prophet Muhammad that calls for unity among Muslims, he said the miseries of Uyghur Muslims and Turkish Muslims in Cyprus must not be ignored just because “you have good relations with that country,” a thinly veiled reference to good relations between China and some Muslim countries, including Pakistan.

“We don’t want you to spoil your relations with that country. But you should use these good relations to improve the situation in which the Uyghur community is living,” he maintained.

Also mentioning the recent hijab ban



in some Indian states, Cavusoglu regretted that Muslim women are denied the right to cover their heads.

- Islamophobia, war in Ukraine

The top Turkish diplomat said Islamophobia is on the rise in Europe.

Referring to the racist reporting about the refugees from the Middle East and Afghanistan during the ongoing war in Ukraine, Cavusoglu said Russia's war in its neighbor has revealed the double standards across the world while conflicts in Libya, Syria, and Yemen have continued for years.

"For us, blood in Kharkiv (Ukraine) and blood in Aleppo (Syria) is the same because this is what our civilization requires," he said.

The ongoing war in Europe, he went on to say, is affecting everyone. "It's a period where ethical values are under attack."

Cavusoglu urged self-criticism to solve the problems of the Muslim worldwide.

"Who is responsible for the current conditions of Muslim Ummah? Blaming others for that is very easy but it will not help. Today, we should be self-critics, and try to see how can we fix ourselves," he said.

- Humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan

Speaking to Anadolu Agency after the meeting, Cavusoglu said he met several counterparts on the sidelines, including Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud.

"We had a very constructive and fruit-

ful meeting to normalize our relations and even make our reviews better than before. We are in terms to cooperate to work together," he said.

On the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, Cavusoglu said Turkish humanitarian organizations are already working there and Ankara has sent humanitarian aid to Afghanistan and provided financial assistance through the UN and non-governmental organizations.

"We have not recognized the Taliban administration but we advise everyone to be engaged with it," he said.

He also said the Turkish Maarif Foundation has opened its schools and two more schools for girls are opening in Kabul soon.

"If the country (Afghanistan) collapses (again), the cost will be much more," Cavusoglu warned.

Regarding the war in Ukraine, he said they are working to achieve a cease-fire, and Turkey is in contact with both sides as the civilians are paying the price in war.

"Yesterday, I also had some calls with my colleagues who are participating in negotiations in Belarus," he said, adding Turkey will continue to work to end the ongoing war.



Uyghur Businessman Jailed for 14 Years for Allegedly Helping Families of Detainees

By Shohret Hoshur and Alim Seytoff
2022.03.24

News of Yusup Saqal's sentence comes as a top Chinese official tours Xinjiang to dispute charges of persecution.

As China's top political adviser declared "all ethnic groups live happily" on a tour of Xinjiang, RFA learned of another Uyghur serving a lengthy prison term for a seemingly harmless act, in this case helping family members of other Uyghurs previously detained by authorities.

Yusup Saqal, a well-known figure and charity organizer for Uyghur soccer in the town of Karamay (in Chinese, Kelamayi), was sentenced to 14 years behind bars in late 2018 on charges of "taking criminals under his wing," Uyghur sources with knowledge of the situation said.

A Uyghur from Karamay who now lives in exile said authorities arrested Yusup, whose real name is Yusupjan Memtimin, in 2017.

In 2014, Yusup drove the wife and children of a detained Uyghur to the detention facility for a prearranged meeting. That incident was later pointed to as the reason for Yusup's own arrest and detention, according to the Uyghur in exile.

When RFA contacted relevant Chinese authorities in Karamay to confirm the information, one Chinese official at Karamay's political and legal bureau confirmed that Yusup



Guards occupy a watchtower on a high-security facility near what is believed to be a re-education camp where mostly Muslim ethnic minorities are detained on the outskirts of Hotan in East Turkistan, May 31, 2019.

been detained and sentenced.

"[He] was sentenced to 14 years in prison," he said.

Yusup resigned from a government job in Karamay in the 1990s and started a wholesale business selling Korla pears and Turpan grapes grown in Xinjiang to other Chinese provinces, said Memetjan, a Uyghur from Karamay who now lives in Norway.

"He would donate to Uyghur soccer teams, and he donated to and organized soccer games in the Uyghur region," he told RFA.

At one time, Yusup clashed with Chinese businessmen, and the police arrested him on suspicion of "intentionally destroying ethnic unity," Memetjan said.

Yusup also was once summoned by China's national security police in 2014 and interro-

pes grown in Xinjiang to other Chinese provinces, said Memetjan, a Uyghur from Karamay who now lives in Norway.

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Yusup also was once summoned by China’s national security police in 2014 and interrogated about why he had given up drinking alcohol, said the first unnamed Uyghur source who lives in exile.

Abdureshid Niyaz, a Uyghur exile based in Turkey and the former editor of Karamay’s Oil Spring Magazine, said Yusup became a target of suspicion by Chinese authorities after he had embraced a more Islamic lifestyle. “When I was arrested and interrogated by the Chinese police in 2002, they had asked me about Yusupjan,” Abdureshid Niyaz told RFA. “The Chinese police wanted to find ‘a problem’ with him.”

Abdureshid said that as a young public figure in the Uyghur society, Yusup offered help to other Uyghurs who came to Karamay in search of a job or a better life. He also tried to help more people who had lost relatives to China’s arbitrary detention campaign after it began in 2014.

Because of this, Yusup was regularly interrogated by the police, he said.

“I think the Chinese government sentenced him for 14 years in prison not because he committed any crime but because he was someone who could unite the people and bring cause for justice,” he said.

Yusup’s more than two decades of charity work toward developing Uyghur soccer was another reason why the Chinese had targeted him, Abdureshid said.

Wang Yang visits Xinjiang

RFA learned of Yusup’s sentence as a top Chinese Communist Party (CPP) official and Politburo member, Wang Yang, visited Xinjiang on an inspection tour from March 18 to 22.

Wang visited the major cities of Urumqi (Wulumuqi), Kashgar (Kashi) and Hotan (Hetian) as well as rural areas. He met with CPP and local government officials and presided over a forum on issues, China’s state-run media reported.

Wang noted that Xinjiang had not experienced any terrorist incidents in the past five years and applauded the region for reducing poverty. He reportedly said that it was his sense that the happiness, fulfillment and security among people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang continues to grow, the reports said.

“We must forge the material foundation of long-term political stability and refute smearing and slandering by enemy forces with the fact that all ethnic groups live happily,” Wang was quoted as saying by the official Xinhua News Agency on Tuesday.

On Tuesday, the U.S. government imposed new sanctions against Chinese officials over the repression of Uyghurs in China and elsewhere, prompting an angry response from Beijing, which has consistently denied committing right abuses against Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities in Xinjiang.



It was no coincidence that Wang's visit came 11 days after Michelle Bachelet, the U.N.'s high commissioner of human rights, announced that she would visit China and the Xinjiang region in May, said Dolkun Isa, president of the Germany-based World Uyghur Congress.

"It appears Wang Yang was sent by Chinese dictator Xi Jinping to order a total cleanup of East Turkistan by sanitizing any traces of China's five-year long genocide and crimes against humanity, and by creating a Potemkin facade of Uyghurs living in peace and happiness under Chinese rule," he told RFA, using the Uyghurs' preferred name for the Xinjiang region.

Earlier this month, Bachelet told the Geneva-based Human Rights Council by videoconference that she had reached an agreement with the Chinese government for a visit "foreseen to take place in May," including travel to Xinjiang.

"China will welcome High Commissioner Bachelet in May and present to her that Uyghurs have been treated well for the past five years and that genocide against Uyghurs was a lie concocted by the U.S.-led Western democracies," Isa said.

Translated by RFA's Uyghur Service. Written in English by Roseanne Gerin.

Saudi Arabia: Detained Uyghur Men at Risk of Torture Must not be Extradited to China

By Amnesty, March 23, 2022



The Saudi Arabian authorities must halt plans to extradite two Uyghur men to China, where they will be at high risk of torture amid a brutal crackdown on Muslim minorities in the country's Xinjiang region, Amnesty International said today.

Religious scholar Aimidoula Waili and his friend Nuermaimaiti Ruze, who have been detained in Saudi Arabia since November 2020 without explanation, were transferred to the capital Riyadh last week and are now believed to be at imminent risk of being forcibly repatriated to China.

"If sent to China, it is highly likely that these two men will be subjected to arbitrary detention and torture in Xinjiang's network of repressive internment camps or prisons, where hundreds of thousands of other Uyghurs have faced grave human rights violations," said Lynn Maalouf, Amnesty International's Deputy Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

"Under international law, the Saudi government has an obligation not to extradite Waili and Ruze to China due to their risk of being tortured. The Saudi authorities should halt all plans to deport the men and immediately release them from detention, unless they are to be charged with a recognizable criminal offence."

Family members of the two Uyghur men told Amnesty International that Waili (also known as Hamdullah Veli) and Ruze (also known as Nur Muhammed Rozi) were transferred from Jeddah to Riyadh on March 16 – a move they believe signals their imminent extradition to China.

"We are extremely worried about our father, what would happen to him if sent to China. We need everyone to help immediately to stop this extradition," Waili's daughter Sumeyye told Amnesty International.

"It is almost certain that my husband would be subjected to torture in China. Please stop this extradition," added Ruze's wife.

Waili, who was previously tortured in prison in Xinjiang, travelled to Saudi Arabia from Turkey in February 2020 to perform Umrah, a religious pilgrimage, with his friend Ruze. In early November 2020, Waili heard from a friend who had spoken to a Saudi official that the government was planning to repatriate him to China. A few days later, he and Ruze were arrested.

The two Uyghur men have been detained since 20 November 2020 and were held in Jeddah Dhahban Central Prison before their transfer to Riyadh. The Saudi authorities have not given Waili and Ruze a reason for their arrest or informed them about any charges against them.

Background

Article 3 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment states that no state party shall extradite a person to another country where they would be in danger of being subjected to torture. Saudi Arabia became party to the convention on 23 September 1997.

Aimidoula Waili was previously arrested in Xinjiang in August 2013 because one of the employees at his factory had allegedly incited an uprising. In early November 2020, Waili told Amnesty International he was tortured in prison: being electrocuted and forced to stand on ice while wearing nothing but slippers and underwear for up to three hours every day.

After his release in 2016, Waili went to Turkey where he was granted residency documents that allowed him to remain in the country indefinitely. Earlier in February 2020, Waili and Ruze entered Saudi Arabia

on a tourist visa to perform Umrah, a religious pilgrimage.

In June 2021, Amnesty International published a report revealing how hundreds of thousands of Muslim men and women in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region are being subjected to arbitrary mass detention, indoctrination and torture.

Testimonies from former internment camp detainees detailed the extreme measures taken by Chinese authorities since 2017 to essentially root out Islamic religious beliefs and traditions, as well as the cultural practices and local languages of the region's Muslim ethnic groups.

The Chinese government has gone to great lengths to cover up the human rights violations taking place in Xinjiang, and to prevent members of the Uyghur diaspora from spe-

aking up about them. Amnesty International has documented numerous cases where Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other Turkic Muslim people in Xinjiang had been detained simply for living, travelling, or studying abroad or for communicating with people abroad. Many were detained simply for being "connected" with people who lived, travelled, studied, or communicated with people abroad.

Amnesty International has launched an international campaign calling for the closure of the internment camps, with more than 70 detailed casefiles on some of those thought to be currently detained. As of September 2021, more than 300,000 signatures had been collected from all over the world to demand the release all those currently detained in internment camps and prisons in Xinjiang.



China, which has been committing genocide in East Turkistan, and Russia, which has invaded Ukraine, are standing together.



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Contact Us:

Adres: Kartaltepe Mah. Geçit Sok. No: 6 Dükkan: 2
Küçükçekmece / İSTANBUL
Tel: +90 212 540 31 15 Gsm: +90 553 895 19 33
+90 541 797 77 00 info@turkistanmedia.com