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Remembering the Barin Township Uprising

By Dr.Suraina Pasha, Islam21c, 2023.4.5

This week marks the 33rd anniversary of one of the worst atrocities carried out by the occupying Chinese government on Uyghur Muslims in East Turkistan.

On 5 April every year, Uyghurs and their supporters around the world commemorate the anniversary of the Barin Township Uprising, which occurred in 1990 in Aqtu county, near Kashgar city. The uprising was a remarkable example of Uyghur resistance to Chinese Communist Party (CCP)- enforced Sinicisation in occupied East Turkistan.

The CCP had restricted Islamic worship, forced abortions of Uyghur women, and encouraged Han-Chinese inward migration to alter the demographic balance. [1] Hundreds of Uyghur youth, farmers, and ordinary men fighting for the honour and dignity of

their families mobilised in protest against this oppression, initially expressing their grievances peacefully.

Peaceful protest turned into violent Chinese response

The leader of the revolt, Zeydin Yusuf, reportedly wrote a letter to the CCP to convey the protesters' concerns.

This peaceful overture was reportedly met by heightened oppression by the CCP, prompting the protesters to revolt and occupy several government buildings.

The CCP securitised the protesters and labelled them "terrorists", while deploying a huge military arsenal to quell the uprising. [2] Uyghur reports estimate that 18,000 military and police officials, Bingtuan, and the air

force, were sent to recapture the government buildings from roughly 500 protesters. After a stand-off lasting between 3 to 5 days, the majority of protesters were martyred.

The CCP's violent suppression of the uprising did not stop with the killing of the protesters. They also conducted mass arrests. Roughly 3,000 Uyghurs were detained while circa 200 were subsequently sentenced to death. Uyghur relatives insist that the arrests and trials were surrounded in opacity. It was not clear whether everyone who was arrested had actually participated in the uprising.

The injustices of the Barin Township trials are illustrated in the case of Mahat Hasan, who was arrested on 15 April 1990, held in detention for two years, and then sentenced to life imprisonment. His relatives told the media that they were not permitted to attend the trial, nor were they told what crime Mahat supposedly committed. He died in prison in 2011.

Never forget!

Those who support Uyghur freedom must not forget the struggles of the Barin Township protesters.

The early blueprint for the ongoing genocide was laid in Barin Township. Its traces resonate to this very day in the measures implemented across East Turkistan to control the Uyghur population and remove their Islamic and Turkistani cultural identities.

While Muslim governments have largely failed the Uyghurs, Muslim civil society stands in solidarity with the oppressed.

Thousands of miles away in Bangladesh in 2022, hundreds of Muslim ulama and activists held a series of protests to remember the martyrs of Barin Township and other Uyghurs who lost their lives in the ongoing genocide.

May Muslims around the world continue to remember the legacy of Barin Township, this year and beyond.

More on the Barin Uprising: The Spirit of the Martyr Abdushukur Nurullah

By Kok Bayraq, Bitter Winter, 2023.4.6

Can a person or a community be both a strict Muslim and pro-Western? It seems impossible, but if I remember the Barin Uprising and friend, martyr Abdushukur Nurullah, I think it is quite possible.

As Bitter Winter explained yesterday, the Barin Uprising had broken out on April 5, 1990. Zaydun (also spelled Zaidin) Yusuf, the leader of the East Turkistan Liberation Party, and 200 other members clashed

with 500 Chinese soldiers and captured the Barin Town Hall. The next day, 15,000 Chinese soldiers from the Southern Military Division arrived for reinforcements with tanks and 3,000 Air Force men. The conflict and raid continued for seven days, and the rebels managed to hold the municipality for two days with handmade weapons.

My friend, Abdushukur Nurullah, a Uyghur high school teacher and martyr, had said



the following to us immediately after the Barin Uprising in Kashgar: "If this religion [Islam] gave these poor and needy people in the village of Barin the courage to fight against a brutality of China and the ability to unite a slumped people on the battlefield, despite being without proper education and military training for 70 years, then this religion is absolutely true and can be the light to our future."

At that time, the Uyghur youth, fed up with the propaganda of the Chinese Communist Party, worn out by colonial policies, and suffering from inhuman atrocities, needed hope and the belief that everything could change to keep their morale alive.

It is important to note that followers of Islam had been without a school in East Turkistan since the Chinese invasion

of 1949. The Xinjiang Islamic Institute, which was opened just for an exhibition in Urumqi in the 1980s, in addition to having low student numbers, aimed at the Sinicization of Islam. Uyghurs could only learn about Islam through family education. In addition, due to the spread of communism in the 20th century, scientific developments, and the collapse of the Islamic Caliphate–Ottoman Empire, there were weak religious beliefs among Uyghur intellectuals (which occurred throughout the Islamic world in general).

Among our Uyghur friends, Abdushukur Nurullah was someone who had strong faith. In our conversations, he would tell the truth about religion and at the same time speak according to scientific principles.

Despite the high losses for the Uyghurs,





the spirit of the Barin Uprising gives the Uyghurs courage, hope and determination against Chinese oppression. After the uprising, new content was added to Abdushukur's "preaching."

He was always stating that, "Islam is, for us, not only a stronghold to protect ourselves from assimilation, but also a powerful weapon to fight against colonialism. Our brothers in the village of Barin have once again manifested this role of our religion with their courage, patriotism, and a spirit of self-sacrifice that did not fear death."

In a conference organized by the Chinese government in the mid-1990s, it was stated that the "Barin Riot" was carried out by a group of "ruffians," "villains" who had been influenced by an "extremist" clergyman named Ablikim Mehsum Hajim, who belonged to the "Wahhabi" sect. Abdushukur, who attended a meeting representing the young teachers of Khorgas No.1 High School at that time, said the following in a private conversation

with us in a hotel's conference room: "A thought or theory, regardless of its name or sect, [which] created history in the shape of 'The Barin Uprising' is highly advanced in my view. When a sect, no matter where it came from, has been able to awaken our people against oppression, it is modern (beneficial). Whoever the creator of that idea is, he is a great and noble man in my heart." He continued, "As an intellectual of an oppressed people, for me, regarding what is right and wrong, black and white, beautiful and ugly, [just] and unjust, there is only one measure, and that is how to stand against China. Anyone who does not dislike or who supports the murderer China, whether a scholar, politician, or a star in any field is, in my eyes, a selfish disgrace and a fool."

His favorite scientist was Albert Einstein, and his favorite political system was American democracy. At the same time, his most cited book was Sayyid Qutb's Milestone, the text of a strict Muslim, of which he appreciated the advocacy for worshiping and fearing only God.

He repeatedly stated, "The Chinese state, led by the Chinese Communist Party, is an extraordinary enemy to us and the entire world; it is impossible to defeat it with 'moderate' ideas and stances from the West; it can only be defeated with the West's advanced weapons. We need a radical idea and a strong friend."

"I think an organizer who develops this awareness and unites the people in this idea can be a national leader for us, he said. Those who distanced themselves from Islam in our society cannot represent



the interests of the Uyghurs, nor do those who turn their backs on the West. Uyghurs can become a symbol of unity between religions and cultures around the world.”

During the Barin Uprising, more than two hundred fighters and civilians were killed in a seven-day battle that followed the raid. In August 1990, the government held four trials and doled out sentences for long periods, life, and even death to 103 rebels from the uprising.

After October 1995, I lost contact with Abdushukur Nurullah. He was arrested in the autumn of 1998 along with 36 compatriot and comrades and he was sentenced to death in 1999, along with seven others.

I heard that when he was allowed to meet with a relative before his execution, he said, “Don’t cry. If you cry, you will make the enemy happy. My wife and daughter are entrusted to God first, and then to my people. I believe that they will not be disgraced. I beg you, be pleased with me. I will be pleased with you forever.”

Chinese authorities, who have always kept the names and activities of these comrades confidential, gave the following clues about Abdushukur’s case while blaming a reporter from Radio Free Asia at a press conference in Urumqi on May of 2021: ” In September 1994, Shohret Hoshur teamed up with Abdushukur Nurullah (the main criminal of the ‘7.14’ violent terrorist bombing in 1997, who was sentenced to death according to the law) to defraud a Hainan company ... suspected of fraud crime...” There are various stories of

heroism in the community about the actions of Abdushukur and his comrades against China, but there are no single reports in the official press, except the single line above. Abdushukur was a good educator; although he studied chemistry as a profession, he remained committed to politics. He took as his customary task to tell his students and friends the difference between Western and Chinese imperialism. He insisted that the original ideal of Western colonialism was a commercial monopoly while Chinese colonialism was a genocide that, if not resisted, would result in carnage.

He was not content with proclaiming his thoughts, but showed that he truly believed in them with his virile attitude, especially in face of death, which he confronted with bravery just like the Barin rebels.

A few years ago, in the Uyghur internet world, accusations of “looking too radical” were posted against women in black dresses , thinking they did not represent the majority of our people and gave the wrong impression to the West, As one of the deceased Abdushukur’s close friends, I replied as follows: “The West is not against the black dress, but against imposing it on others; the West respects those who kept their own identity, not those who imitate the Westerners.”

My comments were widely shared. If there is any value in them, the honor belongs to the Barin revolutionaries and my martyred friends like Abdushukur Nurullah.

Abdushukur Nurullah and the Barin rebels will live forever in the hearts of the Uyghurs, like thousands of other heroes.



Uyghurs in Turkey Commemorate Barin Revolution Against Chinese Atrocities

By ANI, 2023.4.6

Uyghur activists gathered near the Chinese Consulate in Istanbul on April 5 to protest against the atrocities perpetrated by China in East Turkistan on the 33rd anniversary of the Barin revolution.

Uyghur activists held protests near the Chinese Consulate despite the rains.

Uyghurs around the world mark April 5 to honour those who were killed while opposing the Chinese regime and military during the Barin uprising in Akto County, Kizilsu Kirghiz prefecture on April 5, 1990.

The protest began at around 11 am (local time) with the recital of Quranic verses. Around 120

Uyghur men and women joined the protest which was addressed by local Uyghur leader Abdullahad Udun, General Secretary of East Turkistan Human Right Watch (ETHR) and activist Omer Qarim. The protesters raised slogans against the Chinese government and the Chinese Communist Party and displayed banners highlighting the Chinese atrocities.

Abdullahad Udun released a press statement condemning Chinese brutalities that have killed thousands of innocent Uyghurs. Udun said that China has perpetrated genocide in East Turkistan and the world has been watching as spectators. East Turkistan



is known as Xinjiang in China. He urged Turkey and the Islamic world to take steps to prevent the forced genocide of Uyghurs being perpetrated by China in East Turkistan.

Omer Qarim from the East Turkistan Scholars Union urged the Islamic world to pledge an end to the enslavement of Uyghurs in East Turkistan. Turkey is home to one of the largest Uyghur diaspora in exile. Uyghurs in Istanbul have consistently held protests against Chinese atrocities and questioned the Chinese state about the whereabouts of their missing family members.

Meanwhile, protests and conferences were held in different parts of Bangladesh to mark the 33rd anniversary of the Barin Revolution in East Turkistan, which is known as Xinjiang in China.

Bangladesh Khilafat Andolan (BKA) organized a conference presided over by its leader Shaheed Zaidin Yusuf in Dhaka. During the meeting, attendees condemned China for its illegal occupation of East Turkistan (Xinjiang) and for committing atrocities on innocent Uyghur Muslims.

Later, a protest was held to highlight the issue of settling Han Chinese in East Turkistan to reduce the Uyghur populace. The protestors warned the Chinese government to stop such moves. BKA extended its support to the

people of East Turkistan for their freedom from illegal Chinese occupation and urged the international community to come forward and support the cause of Uyghur Muslims.



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Bangladesh Mohajir Welfare and Development Committee (BMWDC) also organized protest demonstrations and human chains near Dhaka University. Some 200 protestors distributed leaflets highlighting atrocities committed against the Uyghur Muslims by the Chinese government. The BMWDC members also submitted a memorandum to the China embassy.



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