

Türkiye's Stance on Uyghurs Issue is Clear, Sincere, Moral: Şentop

By Daily Sabah with AA, 2022-08-24



Türkiye has ethnic, religious and cultural ties with the Uyghur Turks and its stance on this issue is clear, sincere and moral, Parliament Speaker Mustafa Şentop said Wednesday.

Şentop held a videoconference meeting with Li Zhanshu, chairperson of the NPC's governing Standing Committee. In the meeting, Şentop pointed out that the People's Republic of China has a special place within the scope of the Asia Anew Initiative.

He stated that they wanted to further strengthen bilateral relations by establishing a regular dialogue between the parliaments

and increasing mutual visits, and added: «We need to make our bilateral trade with China a more balanced and sustainable structure. We want China's investments in Türkiye to increase.»

«We believe that a new and just world is possible, where international law prevails, peace and justice are established, and prosperity is inclusive for all countries and peoples. I'm glad to hear that we agree on this. In order for the relations between the two countries to go further, we should work on the mutual development of parliamentary

relations,» Şentop said, emphasizing that cooperation in projects carried out in various fields will add depth to economic relations.

During the meeting, Şentop underlined that the Uyghur issue is important for Türkiye.

«We have ethnic, religious and cultural ties with the Uyghur Turks. Türkiye's stance on this issue is clear, sincere and moral. We cannot have an understanding of instrumentalizing our related communities living in the territory of other countries to interfere in the internal affairs of the countries in question. We see these people as a bridge between their countries and our country, as an opportunity to develop cooperation and relations, and we continue our policies this way. We wish our compatriots to be able to

live in peace, tranquility and prosperity in the country they live in, in a climate where they have rights and freedoms on the basis of human rights, and to contribute to the countries they live in as respected citizens of their country.»

During the meeting, which took place in line with the request of the Chinese side, cooperation and economic relations between Türkiye and China in projects carried out in various fields were discussed.

The contribution of inter-parliamentary cooperation to the relations between the two countries was emphasized. It was stated that due to the joint will of the heads of states, Türkiye-China relations had gained momentum in recent years.

UN Rights Chief Hopes Finally to Release Report on China's Uyghurs in Coming Week

By Emma Farge, Reuters, 2022-08-25

The United Nations human rights chief, Michelle Bachelet, said on Monday that she would not seek a second term for personal reasons, refuting speculation that it was a decision linked to blowback over her trip to China last month.

Bachelet, 70, was criticised by rights groups as well as some Western governments, including the United States, who said the conditions Chinese authorities imposed on the visit did not enable a complete and independent assessment of the rights environment.

«As my term as High Commissioner draws to a close, this Council's milestone fiftieth session will be the last which I brief,» she said in a surprise announcement at the end of a wide-ranging speech to the Geneva-based Human Rights Council.

Later, she said the decision was not related to the trip, adding that she intended to return to Chile and spend time with her family.

«Two months ago, before even going to China, I made a decision and I informed my boss, the Secretary-General (Antonio Gu-



terres). So it has no relationship,» she told reporters.

Some diplomats said they had expected Bachelet, a 70-year-old former president of Chile, to stay on after her four-year term expires later in August. There was murmuring in the Geneva Council room when she made the announcement.

In her speech, she said her office was working on an updated assessment of the human rights situation in China's western region of Xinjiang, where there are widespread allegations that mostly Muslim Uyghur people have been unlawfully detained, mistreated and forced to work.

China denies all accusations of abuse there.

«It will be shared with the government for factual comments before publication,» she said of her report, which was due to be published months ago. Asked about the timing, Bachelet said it would be released before her term ends.

Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch called her China trip an «unmitigated disaster» and criticised Bachelet for using China's term «VETCs», for vocational education and training centres, to describe mass detention facilities in Xinjiang.

She repeated the term in her speech on Monday.

On the rights situation in Russia, she said the arbitrary arrest of a large number of protest-

ers there opposed to the invasion of Ukraine was «worrying».

Bachelet also raised concern about abortion restrictions, referring to the United States

where the Supreme Court is expected to strike down a landmark ruling on nationwide abortion rights.

Australian Woman Whose Husband Was Thrown in A Chinese Concentration Camp for 25 Years Launches A Desperate Bid to Bring Him Home

By Nic White and Levi Parsons, Daily Mail, 2022-08-27

An Australian woman whose husband is being tortured in a Chinese concentration camp has launched a desperate bid to bring him home.

Mehray Mezensof, 27, said her life has been «turned upside down» over the past five years after her husband Mirzat Taher was snatched by Chinese police.

Mr Taher is part of the Uyghur ethnic minority and was sent to a «re-education» facility where he was «strung up with no food or water».

Beijing's internationally condemned network of prisons is estimated to hold more than a million Muslims in China's western province of Xinjiang.

Detainees are forced to recite communist propaganda under threat of torture, sterilisation and even organ harvesting, the UN and human rights groups claim.

Mr Taher, 30, has been in and out of concentration camps since 2017, arrested just two days before he was due to move to Melbourne with his wife.

Ms Mezensof has not heard from her hus-

band since September 26, 2020, when he was last detained and then given a 25-year sentence on trumped-up charges.

The determined young woman is now appealing to the United Nations and the Australian Government to pressure China to free him.

Her lawyer Michael Polak has asked the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention to assess Mr Taher's case and rule he is being unjustly detained.

Ms Mezensof on Friday also met with Labor MP Peter Khalil and Liberal senator James Paterson to drum up support for her husband's case.

«My husband is still in prison and i can't contact him. I have to do whatever I can, even if there's a tiny chance. I'm willing to do whatever it takes,» she told Daily Mail Australia.

«It comes down to the amount of pressure that our government can put on China to get my husband released, I'm really hoping for the support of my government.»

Mr Polak, from Justice Abroad, said there was no evidence against Mr Taher and he



was only detained because of his ethnic and religious identity.

He said the UN could investigate why he was detained, if he had a fair trial, and give a legal ruling on the legality of his detention.

This would give the Australian Government leverage when asking Chinese authorities to release him, as China is supposed to abide by UN decisions.

«I think in a case like this where you have a foreign national connection, it becomes more embarrassing for the Chinese Government to be holding someone when the UN said it was unlawful,» he said.

«It is important that Australian politicians make the release of Mulizati a priority in their dealings with the Chinese Government, so he and Mehray can live their life in

peace.

«The UN application marks the first step in our campaign to have Mulizati released so he can start the life he and his wife had planned in Australia.»

Ms solicitor Torik Dib added: «Mr Taher is the victim of systematic and ongoing religious and ethnic cleansing. He has been arbitrarily detained and tortured under false, and unsubstantiated, allegations of separatism.»

The horrors of the camp Mr Taher is trapped in were far from love-struck couple's minds when she arrived in China in 2016 to tie the knot and bring him back to Australia.

«It has turned my whole world upside down. I went there to marry the man of my dreams and for no reason at all, my innocent husband was thrown into prison and taken away



from his family,» Ms Mezensof said.

«It really has taken a toll on me because I don't know how to move forward from this. It has destroyed our lives.

«I have to stay strong for him but at the same time my whole life has fallen apart and I don't know how to cope.»

Mr Taher was sentenced to 25 years in prison for the «trumped-up charge» of «organising, leading and participating in a terrorist organisation».

Ms Mezensof said his real «crime» was travelling to Turkey and working as a tour guide - something China's totalitarian and «paranoid» regime consider «separatism».

Uyghurs are banned from travelling to 26 «sensitive countries», most of which have a Muslim majority population.

«Mirzat was subject to intense interrogations in the «tiger chair» which is used to torture detainees and he suffered multiple seizures. He was then transferred to a Chinese concentration camp,» Mr Polak explained.

The 30-year-old, who was momentarily released twice in 2020 before being «disappeared», is completely cut off from friends and family and has no access to legal counsel.

In the brief period he was on parole, he told his wife he had been handcuffed and «strung up» on a jail cell door for 24 hours straight with no food, water or toilet breaks because he accidentally replied to a guard in his native language and not Mandarin.

«Through his first detainment I was silent and I thought if I was compliant maybe the Chinese government will show compassion, will show mercy and let him go,» Ms Mezensof said.

«But that got us nowhere and I now fear that if I don't speak out for my husband nobody is even going to know he exists.

«I can't just let him disappear in this system the Chinese Communist Party has created.»

The couple's whirlwind romance began when they were introduced online by their mothers who both went to school together in Xinjiang.

Ms Mezensof's family migrated to Australia and she was raised in Melbourne where she became a nurse.

Mr Taher was living in Istanbul at the time learning Turkish and working as a travel guide.

The two «hit it off» from their very first interaction with the pair «constantly cracking jokes and making each other laugh».

After just three months Mr Taher told Ms Mezensof he knew she was «the one» and asked her to marry him.

She said he was the ‹family-oriented man› she had been looking for, so Ms Mezensof packed her bags and headed to the city of Xinjiang capital of Ürümqi in 2016.

The smitten couple had decided it would be easier for the two to get married in Xinjiang and then apply for Mr Taher to get a visa to live in Australia where he hoped to start a Uyghur-style kebab shop.

‹He wasn't one person online and then a different person in real life. He was exactly the same when I met him,› Ms Mezensof said.

‹He just had this really friendly and open personality and was so easy to talk to and get along with.

‹My husband is just a very loving, caring and sweet person and that is what drew him to me. He was constantly smiling and laughing.›

Mr Taher had his Australian permanent residency approved and the couple were all set to fly out on April 12, 2017 but just two days before take-off, their joy turned to horror when Chinese police burst through their door demanding to know which countries the newly-wed had been to.

After explaining he had travelled to Malaysia and Turkey in years gone by, he was taken to the police station and questioned for three days before being hauled off to a detention facility without charge for 10 months.

He was then imprisoned in a re-education camp for another year.

Unable to visit him and restricted from knowing how he was being treated, his distraught wife waited in Ürümqi as long as she could before her visa eventually expired and she was forced to return to Melbourne.



After an agonising two-year wait, Mr Taher was released on parole in May 2019 but was placed under strict surveillance, made to report to police everyday and not allowed to leave the capital.

Ms Mezensof jumped on a plane immediately to be with him but had to leave after six months when her visa expired.

On May 2020, the authoritarian state swooped in again, arresting Mr Taher and alleging he was «organising, leading and participating in terrorist organisation» - something Ms Taher says is ludicrous.

He was sentenced to 25 years in prison and is being held in the notorious Yizhou District's detention centre in the city of Hami completely cut off from the outside world.

The painful situation made Ms Mezensof unable to work.

«I loved being a nurse but I had to step down,» she said. «Many of the things I used to love I just can't do them any more.»

«Just making it through the day when such a huge part of your life is missing is really hard. I'm a mess. I'm falling apart.»

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute identified more than 380 sites in Xinjiang which are being used to detain China's Uyghur population.

Among the most disturbing aspects of the vast prison network is that factories are located alongside the camps, suggesting detainees are being used as forced labour.

Beijing first denied the camps existed but in the face of international pressure have now

acknowledged their existence.

State-run news outlets relentlessly roll out propaganda pieces showing happy, smiling people, outside playing sports and dancing.

Mr Taher told his wife detainees are never allowed to go outside - only to the classroom and to their cells.

«He said the camps consisted of political indoctrination, with prisoners being forced to read and recite Communist Party propaganda and writings praising Xi Jinping,» Ms Mezensof said.

They are also made to renounce their religion and cultural identity communicating only in Mandarin.

«My husband had accidentally replied to one of the guards in his native language instead of Chinese and for that he was subjected to brutal punishment,» Ms Mezensof revealed.

«They handcuffed him and strung him up to the door, leaving him hanging there for a whole day without food, water or toilet breaks.»

«My husband said he would be able to hear the excruciating screams of fellow detainees throughout the night.»

«I tried to ask my husband if he was ever tortured in that way but wasn't ready to open up about what happened.»

Uyghurs living in the diaspora say in the past six months leading up to the Beijing Winter Olympics, the oppression of minority groups has intensified even more.



While most murderers in human history have tried to hide their crimes with reasons and excuses, China does not, as Xi Jinping flaunts his crimes and the genocide of Uyghur Muslims during his recent visit to East Turkistan.



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