

# Uyghur Activists Stage Hunger Strike Outside White House

By The New Arab, 2022-09-20



Uyghur activists started a hunger strike outside the White House on Monday demanding the US hold Beijing accountable for the persecution of Uyghur communities. Photos posted by the Uyghur American Association showed activists waving the flag of East Turkestan - the name they use to refer to the Xinjiang Autonomous Region - and the US flag in Washington, alongside placards calling on Joe Biden's administration to protect Muslim communities targeted by China.

The campaigners included four people who

said they had survived Chinese concentration camps.

They said they would continue their protest until Washington "at least" drafts and introduces a resolution defending Uyghur rights at the forthcoming UN Human Rights Council, according to a video posted later by the American NGO.

«What we want is to raise awareness about the starvation [and] genocide in our homeland East Turkestan...and also we appeal to the US government to introduce a resolution at the UN Rights Council as soon

as possible,» said one activist in the video.

The video was taken at 9pm local time on Monday evening when the group of mostly women and one man had been on strike for ten hours.

World leaders are set to gather in New York City this week for the annual United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

The global summit comes just two weeks after the release of a UN report detailing serious human rights abuses against Uyghurs in China's Xinjiang region.

«The extent of arbitrary and discriminatory detention of members of Uyghur and other predominantly Muslim groups....may constitute international crimes, in particular, crimes against humanity,» it read.

The persecution of Uyghur communities - which includes mass incarceration as well as instances of torture and forced sterilisation - has been well documented by leading human rights organisations including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (HRW).

However, the Chinese government claims the camps are «vocational skills training centres»



necessary to deal with «extremism».

China rebuked the UN report as «a patchwork of false information» and has set about lobbying other countries in the international body to thwart a possible call for further examination of their «anti-extremism campaign».

Ken Roth, former executive director of HRW, said China «more than any government in the past, is trying to undermine the UN human rights system».

## **The Bugur Insurgents: Religious Extremists or Freedom Fighters?**

*By Kok Bayraq, Bitter Winter, 2022-09-21*

The world has seen many national independence struggles, most of which erupted during periods of colonial or imperial weakness and collapse, and had at least a reasonable chance of victory. By contrast, the recent Uyghur independence movement has emerged at a time when

the enemy is the most powerful, and even trying to dominate the world. I think this is a unique and extraordinary phenomenon in human history.

The Bugur Insurgency happened eight years ago today, on September

21, 2014, and was part of this larger phenomenon. On that day, a group of Uyghur insurgents launched an attack on Chinese interests in Bugur County in East Turkestan (Ch. Xinjiang), including two police stations. During the attack, two police officers, two auxiliary police officers, and six residents were killed. Forty attackers blew themselves up or were shot dead by police.

As always, China accused the insurgents of being religious extremists and terrorists, while Uyghur activists claimed that the attackers were young men and women who had lost hope for their future and acted out of suffering. In my view, neither claim represents the true nature of the insurgents.

Recently, I spoke with an eyewitness to the Bugur incident, and he shared the words he recalled he heard from the leader of the insurgents, Memet Tursun. “Brothers, don’t be so foolish to think that China will change. Even if it changes, its policy will not change for us. Let’s remember that four major changes occurred in [the] last century, [with] dozens of governments replaced, [but] no one has brought change to our destiny. We have to do something, even [if] the hope of success is 0.001%, because no action is 100% equal to waiting to be dead.”

Tursun, the eyewitness reported, had also said before the action began: “If you believe what [I] say, just follow me; we’ll meet in the other world. If you don’t, get away from me now, and save your life.



But don’t forget, your poor souls will be a burden to you tomorrow; not only in the hereafter, but also in this world, you will see the day of hell ...”

About 40 of the 60 who had gathered in Tursun’s house followed him, while the rest, including the witness, left the group. His journey of escape from his homeland started that day, and he reached Turkey in July 2015.

I asked him, “Eight years later today, how do you evaluate Memet Tursun’s words?” He answered, “When I decided to leave the group, I thought of my wife and children, and I [did not] want to disturb the peace of my five brothers and their families. However, all my brothers and their spouses [are] in jail now, [even though] I and they have done nothing. I don’t know how my wife and children may survive. As for myself, I am still living [in] uncertainty abroad because of financial instability. Every time when I get scolded by the manager for not being concentrated on my position at the factory where I am working, I really feel regret for not having followed my friends that day. I was convinced of the truth of Tursun Memet’s



words about death.”

I wondered how the fighters had the courage to carry out such a desperate action, with the certainty it would end with their death, while so many are scared even to gather for peaceful demonstrations in the West. Were these fighters provoked, I asked the eyewitness: “Is there any concrete incident that caused these attacks, such as illegal house searches, detaining religious figures, or bullying street vendors?” He replied, “All these things are part of the daily life of the Uyghurs. If these events could trigger conflict, there would be rebellions in 1,000 places every day.”

“So, is it true that their goal was to enter heaven?” I asked. “That was only a part of the goal. The main goal was to make their voices heard and attract international attention,” he answered.

Based on this witness’s impressions, the quotes from the insurgent’s leader, and my own observations from my meetings in many years with fighters on this front, I believe I can summarize the fighters’ goals as follows. The main purpose of the Bugur insurgents was to inform the Chinese state that they would not accept its regime. They wanted to inspire the Uyghur people by demonstrating that they had sons and daughters ready to sacrifice their lives for liberation from China.

They also wanted to let the international community know that there is a place in the world called East Turkestan, Uyghurs



are not members of the Chinese family, and are the legitimate owners of a land that has been occupied. The action was an organized and planned attack whose aim was to sow seeds for a future liberation of East Turkestan, knowing it will be a long journey.

Like many Uyghur insurgents in the last two decades, at least twenty percent of the group consisted of women. Ayshegul, the wife of Tursun Memet, was among the forty insurgents who died. I wondered how a leader can persuade his wife to die with him in the battlefield, and interrogated the eyewitness.

From his tears and words, I concluded that Tursun Memet was not a religious scholar who could illustrate the otherworld as attractive as a preacher would do. His major in college was architecture, and he had a house construction business. All his religious knowledge was earned through self-study during the time out of his work. He was not a philosopher or a politician either, who could explain international law and the good reasons of the Uyghurs. However, he could explain the reasons for

the oppression and genocide that he and his people were suffering, and indicate a road to deal with them in a honorable way. He persuaded his wife and all his friends through an appeal to honesty and patriotism.

In the end of the conversation, the witness said: “You can publish my statement, if there is something that will benefit our people. There is nothing that would justify the Chinese committing genocide.” I reassured him with these words: “In my opinion, planning and organizing an action that in the insurgent’s intention would give to Uyghurs a better future were not crimes, as China claimed.

The insurgents were sure their actions were based on their national, ethnic, and human rights. At any rate, the act of

resistance by an individual or group in any form does not justify punishing an entire people. Turkey had his problems with the Kurds, Britain with the Irish IRA, Spain with Basque and other separatists. They did not punish entire populations, nor did they put millions in re-education camps.”

The insurgents were not naïve or desperate youths, as they were sometimes depicted. They were smart and mature young men and women, who correctly predicted what was going to happen in the area. They were not trying to break up a legitimate country, but to liberate their own nation from the yoke of an occupation that oppresses millions people.

Therefore, while the Bugur rebels are terrorists in China’s eyes, they are and remain heroes in my heart.

## UN Urged to Act on China’s Reported Rights Violations in Xinjiang

*By Asim Kashgarian, VOA, 2022-09-21*

On the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, rights activists and several Western diplomats attended a meeting to urge the U.N. to take action over China’s reported mistreatment of Uyghurs and other Turkic ethnic groups in Xinjiang.

“Discrimination of this kind and in such dimensions is not acceptable in today’s world,” said Bob Rae, Canada’s permanent representative to the U.N., in his opening remarks at a panel discussion hosted by

the Atlantic Council research group and Human Rights Watch.

The discussion was a response to the release of a long-awaited U.N. human rights report which found that the Chinese government committed “serious human rights violations.”

### UN assessment on Xinjiang

Last month Michelle Bachelet, on the last day of her tenure as U.N. high commissioner for human rights, published her office’s



assessment of the rights situation in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, or XUAR. The report said China “may have committed crimes against humanity” against Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim ethnic groups under the pretext of counterterrorism and counter-extremism measures.

The assessment of U.N. human rights officials called on the Chinese government to account for its practices and to release all individuals arbitrarily detained in Xinjiang. The report described other rights violations in Xinjiang in areas including religious, cultural and linguistic identity and expression; rights to reproduction, privacy and freedom of movement; forced labor; family separation; and reprisals for speaking out.

“How these atrocities are addressed goes ultimately to the credibility of the

U.N. system, to the credibility of our international system itself,” said Jeffrey Prescott, deputy to the U.S. ambassador to the U.N., during the forum.

He continued, “It’s deeply disheartening to see a country that has been so central to the creation of the modern U.N. system, and enjoys the status of a permanent member of the Security Council, so profoundly violating its commitments.”

Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, the immediate predecessor to Bachelet as U.N. human rights commissioner, told the attendees at the event that while he credited the high commissioner’s office for publishing the report on human rights in Xinjiang, he said more needs to be done.

“There are two shortcomings in the way that I read this report,” he said, adding that one was not to refer to the abuses



as genocide and the other was not calling for the establishment of a formal U.N. commission of inquiry into the findings of the report.

A “commission of inquiry” is a U.N. investigative tool which would look further into allegations of human rights violations and push for accountability.

“Inaction is no longer possible,” Fernand de Varennes, the United Nations’ special rapporteur on minority rights, said at the forum. “If we allow this to go unpunished, what kind of message is being propagated?”

### China’s response

On September 13, during the 51st session of the Human Rights Council, Chen Xu, China’s ambassador to the U.N. in Geneva, spoke on behalf of China and 28 countries. He delivered a joint statement saying, “We are deeply concerned that the OHCHR, without the authorization of the Human Rights Council and the consent of the country concerned, released the so-called ‘assessment’ on Xinjiang, China, which is based on disinformation and draws erroneous conclusions.”

Also this month, Chen said his government could not cooperate with the U.N. human rights office following the release of the report.

China’s foreign ministry spokesman, Wang Wenbin, described the U.N. report as “completely illegal,” during a September 1 press conference.

“It is a patchwork of disinformation that serves as a political tool for the U.S. and

some Western forces to strategically use Xinjiang to contain China,” said Wang.

“In recent years, Xinjiang has enjoyed sustained economic growth, social harmony and stability, better living standards, cultures thriving like never before, and freedom of religious beliefs and religious harmony,” Wang told reporters.

### Xinjiang-related actions from abroad

The United States and Canada describe China’s actions in Xinjiang as genocide. The European Parliament said China’s treatment of Muslim, Turkic ethnic groups in Xinjiang holds “a serious risk of genocide.”

The U.S. imposed sanctions on Chinese officials responsible for the mistreatment of Uyghurs and implemented a law called the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act to stop goods made by Uyghur forced labor from entering the U.S. markets.

“We need to deal with the question of what further sanctions will be required,” Canada’s Rae said. “We need to deal with the question of what further steps could be taken to respond to the extent of this crisis.”

### U.N. response and suggestions

The U.N. human rights office said it is up to member states to determine the next steps, but “the assessment states that the human rights situation in XUAR requires urgent attention by the Government, the United Nations intergovernmental bodies and human rights system, as well as the international community more broadly.

We stand ready to continue engagement, including on outcomes of the visit and implementation of the recommendations, of the report,” media officer Jeremy Laurence told VOA in an email.

He said there is no planned discussion on Xinjiang or the human rights assessment during the 51st session of the Human Rights Council.

Nury Turkel, chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) is asking member states to urge the incoming high commissioner to further investigate the situation in Xinjiang and suggested opening a U.N. commission of inquiry.

“We do hope the OHCHR report will

galvanize further support from those nations who have so far abstained from taking the kind of necessary action that crimes against humanity should invoke,” Turkel said.

“Turning a blind eye to the perpetration of crimes against humanity and persecution of a religious minority would be an unconscionable failure,” Carolyn Nash, Amnesty International USA’s Asia advocacy director, told VOA.

Nash said the U.N. human rights office’s report corroborated extensive evidence of serious human rights violations previously documented by Amnesty and other rights groups.

## Seven-Year Mobile Surveillance Campaign Targets Uyghurs

*By Phil Muncaster, Info Security, 2022-09-23*

Researchers have revealed a long-running surveillance and espionage campaign targeting one of China’s largest ethnic minority groups.

First discovered by Palo Alto Networks back in 2016, the “Scarlet Mimic” group was initially spotted targeting Uyghur and Tibetan rights activists. Although the Chinese government has long oppressed and spied on these and other minority groups in the country, there is currently no direct attribution of this group’s activities to Beijing.

Check Point explained in a new report this

week that the mobile malware used by Scarlet Mimic actually dates back to 2015.

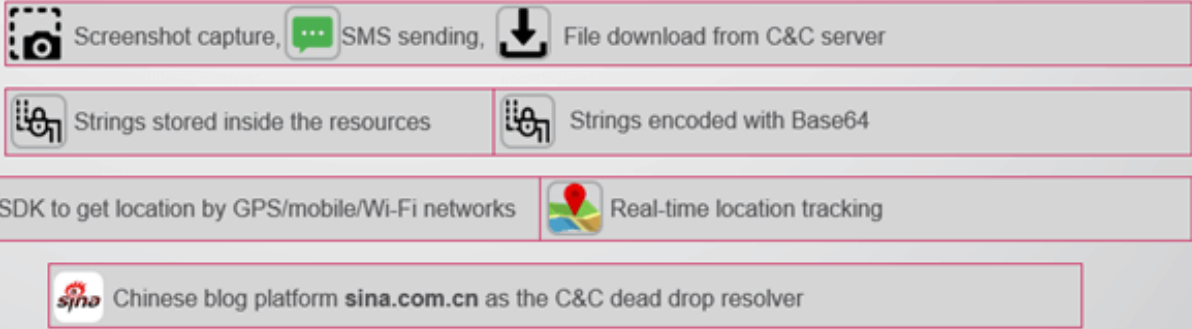
It has since tracked 20 variants of the MobileOrder Android spyware, the most recent dated mid-August this year.

“The malware is relatively unsophisticated from a technical standpoint. However, its capabilities allow the attackers to easily steal sensitive data from the infected devices, even perform calls or send an SMS and track their location in real-time,” said Check Point.

“This makes it a powerful and dangerous surveillance tool. This tool also allows audio



## Evolution of MobileOrder malware capabilities



recording of incoming and outgoing calls, as well as surround recording.”

The malware itself is thought to be hidden in applications with titles written in the Uyghur language, and disguised as PDF documents, photos or audio. It is spread via social engineering rather than being made available on the Google Play Store, Check Point said.

“When the victim opens the decoy content, the malware begins to perform extensive surveillance actions in the background. These include stealing sensitive data such as the device information, SMS messages, the device location, and files stored on the device,” the report continued.

“The malware is also capable of actively executing commands to run a remote shell, take photos, perform calls, manipulate the SMS, call logs and local files, and record the surround sound.”

Check Point urged anyone who may be a target for this campaign to install anti-malware software on their device, use a VPN and be wary of clicking on suspicious links.

“Scarlet Mimic seems to be a politically motivated group. In the past, there have been reports from other researchers that it could be linked to China,” the vendor concluded.

“If true, it would make these surveillance operations part of a much wider issue, as this minority group has reportedly been on the receiving end of attacks for many years.”

Beijing is on the defensive at the UN this week after a long-awaited report from the UN Human Rights Office corroborated evidence of serious human rights violations against Uyghur and other ethnic minority groups in the Xinjiang region.



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