

Uyghur Convict in Indonesia Deported Amid Fears He Was Sent to China

By Arie Firdaus, Benar News, 2022-09-27



Ahmet Bozoglan (left) walks for his appearance at the North Jakarta District Court on terrorism charges in Jakarta, July 29, 2015

Indonesia deported a Uyghur terror convict in July after he served his sentence, police revealed without saying where he was sent amid fears that he was expelled to China which, the United Nations says, represses Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities.

Ahmet Bozoglan, 35, who was convicted in 2015, had a Turkish passport when he was arrested in Poso, a regency in Central Sulawesi province, the year before.

Bozoglan had been incarcerated on the penal island of Nusa Kambangan off Java, said

Aswin Siregar, senior commissioner with the Densus 88 anti-terror unit at the Indonesian national police.

"[Bozoglan] was released on July 1 and was deported," Aswin told BenarNews.

When asked where Bozoglan was deported to, he replied: "Please ask the relevant authorities."

Ahmad Nursaleh, spokesman for the directorate general of immigration, did not immediately respond to questions from BenarNews about Bozoglan's whereabouts.

The Uyghur man's former lawyer, Faris, confirmed that he was released on July 1, but said he did not know where Bozoglan was expelled to.

"We are no longer representing him," Faris, who goes by one name, told BenarNews.

Three other Uyghur men who were released from Indonesian custody in September 2020 were believed to have been deported to China after Beijing allegedly paid fines imposed on them by the court, two security researchers had told BenarNews back then.

One of the researchers had got the information from sources at the prison where the men had been held, he said. Those three Uyghur men, too, had Turkish passports when they were arrested alongside Bozoglan.

Moh Adhe Bhakti, a researcher at the Center for the Study of Radicalism and Deradicalization (PAKAR) said Bozoglan had likely been deported to China.

"Looking at the previous case, it doesn't seem to be different," Adhe told BenarNews.

Adhe added that the Indonesian government had offered the men released in 2020 to the Turkish government, but Ankara was "reluctant."

"Perhaps China managed to show that they are Chinese citizens, so the Indonesian government finally sent them back to China," Adhe said.

BenarNews contacted the Turkish and Chinese embassies in Jakarta, but received no prompt response.

A U.N. report in June said China's repression of Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities in its western Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR)

"may constitute international crimes, in particular crimes against humanity."

The report said that "serious human rights violations" had been committed in XUAR in the context of the Chinese government's application of counter-terrorism and counter-extremism strategies.

Authorities in the region are believed to have held close to 2 million Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in a vast network of internment camps since early 2017.

Bozoglan and the three other Uyghurs were sentenced to between six and eight years in prison and fined 100 million rupiah (U.S. \$6,600) by a Jakarta court in 2015 after being found guilty of entering the country using fake passports and attempting to join the Islamic State-affiliated Eastern Indonesia Mujahideen (MIT) militant group based in Poso.

At the time, MIT had sworn allegiance to Islamic State extremist group and welcomed foreign mujahideen to join them.

'They will most likely be executed'

Andreas Harsono, a researcher for New York-based Human Rights Watch who accompanied the four Uyghurs during their trial, feared the worst for the former convicts.

"They should not have been deported to China because they will most likely be executed. We don't believe the legal system there is fair," Andreas told BenarNews.

"We have conveyed this to the Indonesian government, but there has been no answer."

In a 2020 interview, Bozoglan had expressed fear that, like the other three Uyghurs, he

would be deported to China after completing his prison sentence.

"I'm just someone who ended up getting detained in Indonesia while looking for a way to get to Turkey, and so I'm asking for help to go to Turkey or Europe or another place to seek asylum so that I am not returned to China," Bozoglan told Radio Free Asia (RFA), an online news service affiliated with BenarNews.

"My friends' six-year sentences were up, but they were going to have to stay an extra six months as a fine for problems with their passports. China paid the six months of fees and then sent the three of them back home." Lawyers for the four Uyghurs said they were Turkish nationals on holiday in Indonesia, but prosecutors argued they held fake Turkish

passports and were on their way to meet MIT leader Santoso, who was Indonesia's most wanted terrorist at that time. Santoso was gunned down in a counter-terrorism manhunt in July 2016.

Bozoglan said his three Uyghur comrades were forced to sign documents acknowledging that their fines had been paid and that, later, they overheard the head of their prison telling guards that the Chinese embassy had footed the bill and "planned to take them to China."

After being detained in September 2014, Bozoglan said that Chinese authorities – including Uyghur police and embassy officials – showed up on multiple occasions and accused them of being "black coats," or terrorists.

Uyghur Rights Groups Support Request to Debate China's Xinjiang Record

By Asim Kashgarian, VOA, 2022-09-27

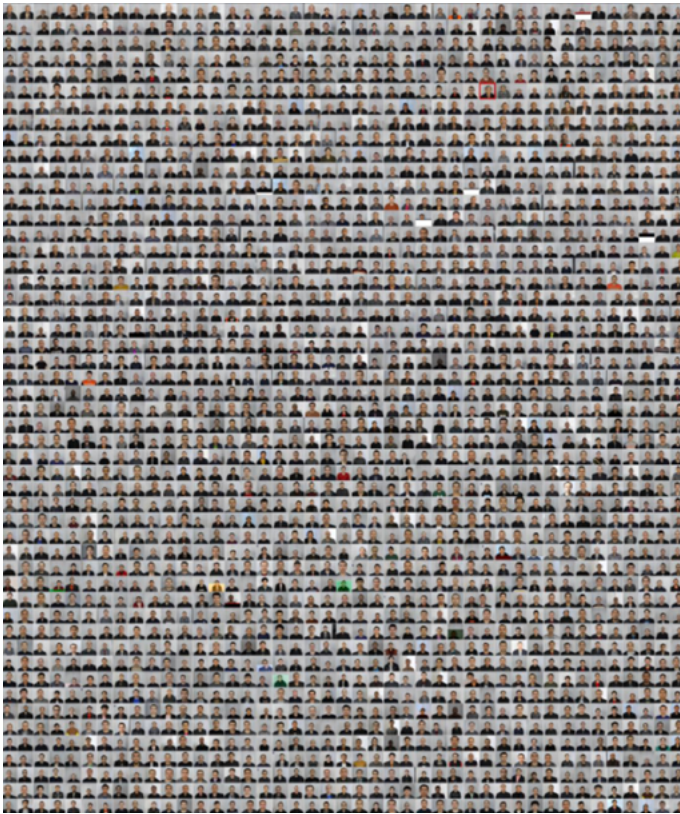
Rights groups urge other countries to follow the lead of the U.S. and several other Western countries that are asking the United Nations Human Rights Council to hold a debate in its next session in 2023 on China's human rights record in the Xinjiang region.

"The international community must remember its obligation to end atrocity crimes like genocide and crimes against humanity," said Dolkun Isa, president of the World Uyghur Congress.

The draft resolution presented Monday

included the backing of Britain, Canada, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Norway.

More than 60 Uyghur organizations from 20 countries welcomed the draft resolution. In a joint statement, the groups said they will continue to push for further action following last month's U.N. assessment on China's treatment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang. The report concluded that Beijing may have committed «crimes against humanity» against Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslim populations.



«Governments must seize this opportunity to finally respond to the abuses,» said Omer Kanat, executive director of the Washington-based Uyghur Human Rights Project.

While Uyghur rights groups are encouraged by some of the Western governments' action, «the response from governments needs to be commensurate with the gravity of the abuses Uyghurs have faced, and are still facing, on the ground,» Peter Irwin, senior program officer at the Uyghur Human Rights Project, told VOA.

«When negotiations get underway, governments need to keep in mind the legitimacy of the U.N. human rights system itself — a system they may need to rely on one day for support,» Irwin said.

Beijing's response

On Tuesday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin told the press in Beijing that the Western countries that signed the draft resolution are using the U.N. Human Rights Council to interfere with Beijing's domestic affairs. He added that some countries are trying to discredit and contain China's development.

«They blatantly apply double standard and have gone so far as to name and shame some developing countries and openly pressure them. This has poisoned the atmosphere and led to aggravated confrontation at the Human Rights Council, which is detrimental to international human rights cooperation. The international community firmly rejects such practice,» Wang said.

Chinese officials have repeatedly said accusations of human rights abuses in Xinjiang are lies and that Beijing's policies are aimed at fighting terrorism, separatism, radicalization and violence.

The Chinese embassy's spokesperson, Liu Pengyu, told VOA that Beijing has addressed «both the symptoms and root causes» of terrorism and has made it safe for the residents of Xinjiang.

«We hope that the United States and the West will stop using the Human Rights Council as a tool for political manipulation, view Xinjiang's anti-terrorism and radicalization efforts in a fair, objective and responsible manner,» Liu wrote in an email response to VOA.

Last week, 27 nations supported Beijing

on this issue in a statement to the council.

UN Xinjiang assessment

Just before Michelle Bachelet's term ended as U.N. high commissioner for human rights, she released a much-anticipated report on China's human rights violations in Xinjiang, including arbitrary detention of Muslim groups including Uyghurs in so-called vocational education training centers, forced sterilization, coerced labor, family separation and religious repression.

The recommendations in the assessment included asking for the Chinese government to release individuals who have been arbitrarily detained in Xinjiang and conduct «a full review of the legal framework governing national security, counterterrorism and minority rights» in the Xinjiang region.

Commission of inquiry

The U.N. General Assembly has become a platform for rights organizations to ask the international community to take further action toward China following the U.N. assessment.

On the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly in New York last week, some rights groups and diplomats met and pushed for a U.N. investigative and accountability tool called a commission of inquiry, which would further look into allegations of China's human rights violations.

Survivors of China's so-called reeducation camps went on a hunger strike last

week outside the White House and accused Beijing of causing «ongoing forced starvation» of Uyghurs and other minorities under COVID-19 lockdown measures in Xinjiang.

Two U.S. lawmakers, Republican Congressman Chris Smith and Democratic Congressman Tom Suozzi, introduced legislation Friday urging the U.S. government to sponsor a resolution that would establish a U.N. commission to investigate the rights violations in Xinjiang.

«The first concrete step done immediately is to file a resolution. We have only a few days to get that done at the U.N.,» Smith told VOA. «And even that's not enough.»

On Saturday, dozens of Uyghurs protested outside the U.N. building in New York, calling for an investigation into the alleged abuses in Xinjiang.

This week's draft resolution presented to the U.N. generated more response from rights organizations.

«A modest — and yet unprecedented — step at the UN Human Rights Council's 51st session towards accountability for Chinese government,» tweeted Sophie Richardson, China director at Human Rights Watch.

The 51st session of the U.N. Human Rights Council convened September 12 and ends October 7.

The council is expected to vote on the draft resolution next week. It is the first time a draft resolution to the council is focused on China.

COVID Disinfectant Poisoning Kills At Least 13 Uyghurs in Village in Xinjiang

By Shohret Hoshur, RFA, 2022-09-30

At least 13 Uyghurs have died as a result of poisoning from disinfectants sprayed in their homes last week used to fight a wave of coronavirus infections in a county in northwestern China's Xinjiang region, local residents and officials said.

The Uyghurs who died were all residents of Guma county (in Chinese, Pishan), Hotan (Hetian) prefecture. They are said to be among thousands of people in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) reported to have been poisoned by disinfectants used to fight the COVID-19 virus, according to online comments on social media.

Many videos shared online show authorities spraying inner walls, furniture, bedding as well as inside refrigerators in homes in the region. Residents said planes with sprayers have flown over the area frequently since the lockdown.

Acting on an anonymous tip about the deaths in Guma, RFA confirmed that at least a dozen people from a village in the county have died of COVID disinfectant poisoning.

"I am told it is about 12 or 13 [who died]," said a local official in charge of overseeing 10 households in a village in Guma county.

"It happened on Sept. 20," he said.

The official, who declined to be named in order to discuss the incident, told RFA that a resident named Ibrahim from a family in the village died of the disinfectant poisoning. He said one of his own relatives, the wife of one of his cousins, had also died.

"Her name was Atihan. She was a housewife between the ages of 45 and 50," he said.

Five people from another Uyghur family lost their lives after heavy spraying, said the official.

"A woman named Atahaji died along with her daughter, two grandchildren and one daughter-in-law — five of them," he said.

"The government sprayed disinfectants on the roofs and in the yards of each house to disinfect, and as a result, all of the residents passed out, and there was no one from the government to take them to the hospital," a Uyghur from the affected area in Guma told RFA.

The man, who requested anonymity for safety reasons, said police detained his 24 year-old son because he refused to let authorities inside their house to spray.

"This is what the community is going through," the man said. "There is nothing to eat, and the whole community has been knocked out by [authorities'] spraying the so-called disinfectant. We all don't know what will happen tomorrow when we wake up."

Spraying from the air

An information service hotline operator in Hotan did not deny the deaths from the disinfectant spray, but advised RFA to contact the Epidemic Command Center for details.

A staffer from the center confirmed that there had been incidents of Uyghurs sickened by disinfectant poisoning at a local hospital.

But when asked her about the death toll from the poisonings, she angrily replied, "Don't ask such questions."

RFA later spoke with another staffer at the center who said she had to check with a supervisor before giving out any details, but later confirmed that the poisoning incident occurred in Guma county.

When asked about the name of the village where the incident occurred, she said she was from Hotan city and was not too familiar with Guma county.

A third staffer referred RFA to the center's Information Services Office for the number of residents who had died from the spraying.

Another Guma resident blamed the deaths on aerial disinfectant sprays by plane over the previous nine days in Hotan.

A second Hotan resident also said airplanes had been flying over the area since the lockdown began.

Memet Imin, a New York-based Uyghur medical researcher, said there are various types of disinfectants in use right now, though it is unclear what kind of disinfectant authorities used in Guma.

"There are studies that excessive and long-term use of disinfectants against COVID-19 can be harmful to health," he said. "A lot of scientific research has been done on this."

"Therefore, when the concentration of some disinfectants exceeds a certain limit, it may cause some injuries in the skin, eyes, respiratory tract, nerves system and digestive tract, and in some cases, it may cause serious illness," he said.

Parts of Xinjiang have been under a strict lockdown since early August under China's "zero COVID" policy, forcing Uyghurs in affected areas to rely on local official for scarce food handouts. Others have not been able to obtain necessary medications. RFA has previously reported deaths from starvation or lack of access to medicine in Ghulja.

The severe lockdown is making life worse for the predominantly Muslim Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities in Xinjiang who have been subject to a crackdown by Chinese authorities since 2017 that has included mass detentions in internment camps and prisons and serious human rights violations.

A report issued in late August by the U.N.'s Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights said the repression in the XUAR "may constitute international crimes, in particular crimes against humanity."



Massive Protests in Turkey by Uyghurs Against 'Chinese Occupation' on 73rd National Day



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