

URGENT ACTION

UYGHUR JAILED FOR 15 YEARS IN SECRET TRIAL

Ekpar Asat, a Uyghur entrepreneur and philanthropist, was convicted in a secret trial on charges of “inciting ethnic hatred and ethnic discrimination” and sentenced to 15 years in prison. He went missing in April 2016, after returning to Xinjiang from attending a US State Department leadership training programme. No contact has been made with him for more than four years and, without official information about his whereabouts, there are grave concerns for Ekpar Asat’s condition and wellbeing.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

*President of the People’s Republic of China
Xi Jinping
Zhongnanhai
Xichangan’jie Xichengqu, Beijing Shi 100017
People’s Republic of China
Fax: +86 10 6238 1025
Email: english@mail.gov.cn*

Dear President Xi:

*I am writing to express my concern about Uyghur entrepreneur and philanthropist **Ekpar Asat** (伊克帕·阿萨特), who was convicted in a secret trial on charges of “inciting ethnic hatred and ethnic discrimination” (煽动民族仇恨、民族歧视) and sentenced to 15 years in prison.*

Ekpar Asat went missing in April 2016 three weeks after returning to Xinjiang from the United States, where he had just attended the International Visitors Leadership Program organized by the US State Department.

It has now been four years since anyone has seen Ekpar Asat, with no information about his whereabouts, condition or the evidence against him having been made public. In fact, it was only through communications between the Chinese authorities and a few US senators in December 2019 and January 2020 that his sister found out about his sentencing. It is distressing to learn that the authorities have provided no further details about his case.

I am deeply concerned about reports that the trial was conducted in secret and that Ekpar Asat was not allowed access to a lawyer of his choice. Without any information about his current condition or whereabouts, I fear for his wellbeing.

I therefore call on you to:

- **Release Ekpar Asat immediately and unconditionally, unless there is sufficient, credible and admissible evidence that he committed an internationally recognized offence and is granted a fair trial in line with international standards;**
- **Pending his release, disclose Ekpar Asat’s whereabouts, allow him access to his family and a lawyer of his choice, and ensure he is not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.**

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ekpar Asat is a Uyghur entrepreneur and philanthropist dedicated to helping older people and children with disabilities. He founded a popular social media app that featured news, history, literature, column, entertainment, music and legal updates. After Ekpar Asat went missing in April 2016, the app kept operation for a year until April 2017. His parents are members of the Chinese Communist Party and he participated in events organized by the Chinese authorities before he went missing.

The US Embassy in Beijing encouraged Ekpar Asat to apply for the State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) after he met with Max Baucus, then the American ambassador to China, in Xinjiang in 2014. The IVLP is the US Department of State's premier professional exchange programme in which current and emerging foreign leaders in a variety of fields experience the US first hand and build relationships with American counterparts.

The US State Department mentioned Ekpar Asat's case in its 2019 human rights report on China. After a bipartisan group of US senators urged China to release Ekpar Asat, the Chinese Embassy in Washington, DC, responded by email in January 2020 with information about Ekpar Asat's conviction and sentencing but without providing any further details.

Xinjiang is one of the most ethnically diverse regions in China. More than half of the region's population of 22 million people belong to mostly Turkic and predominantly Muslim ethnic groups, including Uyghurs (around 11.3 million), Kazakhs (around 1.6 million) and other populations whose languages, cultures and ways of life vary distinctly from those of the Han who are the majority in "interior" China.

Media reports have illustrated the extent of new draconian security measures implemented since Chen Quanguo came into power as Xinjiang's Party Secretary in 2016. In October 2016, there were numerous reports that authorities in the region had confiscated Uyghur passports in an attempt to further curtail their freedom of movement. In March 2017, the Xinjiang government enacted the "De-extremification Regulation" that identifies and prohibits a wide range of behaviours labelled "extremist", such as "spreading extremist thought", denigrating or refusing to watch public radio and TV programmes, wearing burkas, having an "abnormal" beard, resisting national policies, and publishing, downloading, storing, or reading articles, publications, or audio-visual materials containing "extremist content". The regulation also set up a "responsibility system" for government cadres for "anti-extremism" work and established annual reviews of their performance.

It is estimated that up to a million Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other predominantly Muslim people have been held in the "transformation-through-education" centres. The Chinese authorities had denied the existence of such facilities until October 2018, when they began describing them as voluntary, free "vocational training" centres. They claim that the objective of this vocational training is to provide people with technical and vocational education to enable them to find jobs and become "useful" citizens. China's explanation, however, contradicts reports of beatings, food deprivation and solitary confinement that have been collected from former detainees.

China has rejected calls from the international community, including Amnesty, to allow independent experts unrestricted access to Xinjiang. Instead, China has made efforts to silence criticism by inviting delegations from different countries to visit Xinjiang for carefully orchestrated and closely monitored tours.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Chinese, English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 24 June 2020

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Ekpar Asat (he/him)

ADDITIONAL TARGETS

Wang Jiang
Deputy Director
Department of Justice of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region
626 Xinquan Jie, Tianshan Qu
Urumqi
830002 Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region
People's Republic of China

And copies to:

His Excellency Mr Liu Xiaoming
Embassy of the People's Republic of China
49-51 Portland Place W1B 1JL
020 7299 4049
Monday-Friday 09.00-12.30, 14.00-17.00
www.chinese-embassy.org.uk