

# **Witness Statement**

## **Tursunay Ziyawudun**

### **Female – Age 42**

1. I am Uyghur. I was born in Karboghay village, Kunes county, China on 10<sup>th</sup> August 1978. I was sent to a camp on two occasions. The first was from about 10 April 2017 to 15 May 2017. The second was from 10 March 2018 to 25 December 2018. On 26 September 2019, China allowed me to leave from China to Kazakhstan. Then, I came to the USA.

### **First Detention in China**

2. My husband is ethnically Kazakh and moved to Kazakhstan. I went to live with him in Kazakhstan in 2011. In 2016, I had to return to China as my Kazakhstani visa expired. My husband travelled with me. I wanted to get another visa to return to Kazakhstan as soon as possible. When I returned to Kunes County, I was constantly called for questioning and statement taking by the police. Both me and my husband's passports were confiscated by the police. Recognising our desire to return quickly to Kazakhstan was not going to come true, we rented a house in Kunes county.
3. Around 10 April 2017, we got a call from the police station, telling us to stay put and wait outside our house. It didn't take long for a police car to arrive and the policeman told me to get in and told me I had a meeting to attend. The police officer said I could come back after the meeting - it wouldn't take long. I agreed, and at that moment two police officers grabbed me by both arms and shoved me into the police car. They took me to the first camp, which was still a school at that time. Once there, they took me into a hall to find that there were about a thousand people, both male and female, including many old people inside. I heard two staff members ask what they should do, how they should arrange for so many people. We were told by a policeman that they were going to arrange accommodation for us. Hearing this, I ran over crying and asked the why he wouldn't let us out and why he was arresting us. They brought my husband over and he told me that he would get me out. After that they took us to the next room, which was a student dormitory like place. We were just a lot of people crammed together. There were a lot of old people. At that time, they were not prepared, there was no preparation, it was just an order from the top, saying how many people should be arrested in each area, this is what the police officers clearly said to us, they said they were just following the order from the top. Because the order was given very suddenly, they did not have any preparation, camps were not built, so they crammed all these people in the local secondary school. We

didn't sleep that night, as we were all crying. The next day we ate in the school cafeteria. Then we were informed that we were to go to class in two days.

4. When we arrived at that day, there was a man who came to teach us about the law, and then an Imam came to us and told us not to pray, that it was wrong, not to wear a headscarf, not to wear a skirt, not to believe in God, and we have to believe in the communist party.
5. None of us could take it at that time, we were shocked and scared. None of us spoke. Then every three or four days we were asked questions, they asked us what had changed in our minds, they asked us what we understood, whether our minds had changed. They did not allow us to communicate in the Uyghur language, only in Chinese. They said if you can't speak Chinese then don't speak at all. They would take us to the playground to dance and just play communist songs for us to dance to and then make us learn the songs that glorified the communist party.
6. Then the food was also particularly bad. I was not able to eat. I was in a constant state of vomiting. A month later I fainted, and they took me to the hospital. The doctor said I had severe food poisoning and I was hospitalized, but I was watched by someone. I cried to my husband on the phone every day, and my husband went to the police station with my diagnosis and just kept going to them, giving them the proof that my health was in a bad state and that I would die if I continued. That police chief was a Kazakh named Bakip, and he agreed that he would issue me papers so I could get out soon. I was taken back after I was discharged, but the place was particularly changed from the time I went there before. When I was taken back a week later it had been transformed into a prison. It was a very scary state. I stayed one night, and there were seven or eight girls in the cell I stayed in. The next day I was taken out. I got out around the 15 May 2017.
7. About a month or so after I got out, we went back to inquire about our passports, and they said that whilst they would give my husband a passport, they would not give me a passport, they would have to process my husband's passport, and they made me sign as a guarantor. My husband went back to Kazakhstan around 15 June 2017. He called me when he arrived, he told me to not worry and to take care of myself and wait for his message. From then on, I couldn't contact him. The police kept asking me where my husband is and when he's coming back.
8. Around June 2017, it was particularly bad, particularly scary. They were arresting people everywhere. I was so scared that we didn't dare to walk on the street, not knowing when it would be our turn. I thought I had already gotten out after going in once, and they wouldn't come back for me later.

## **Second Detention in China**

9. On 8 March 2018 the police called me and asked me to come over and I asked if they were going to send me to the camp again. They had already sent two of my brothers to the camps. I still thought the situation inside would be the same as when I first went there. If I had known that the situation inside had reached a state of insane cruelty, I would have killed myself, and I would not have agreed to go in. I would have killed myself for sure. I would rather kill myself than suffer what I had to endure. I went to the police station on the 10 March 2018 to report myself.
10. Two police officers took me to the camp, and I entered through another newly opened door. At that time, the whole area around the camp was fenced off. Within a hundred meters, it was surrounded by a fence. My cell phone was taken away. There were already four big buses at the gate when I arrived. Some people had children, and police officers took the children away by force and took them to another bus to be sent somewhere else. That was the beginning of one of the darkest, most tragic days of my life.
11. As soon as you enter, there are two armed guards standing on the left and right. They have a machine that scans people. In another room, there were two police officers who searched everyone, and they ripped off all their clothes. An old woman was standing in front of me, about seventy years old, they tore off her skirt, leaving only her underwear, and her upper body was just a small vest. She tried to cover her breasts, the policeman did not allow her to do that, she had to stand straight, she had to let go of her hands, her chest was open. There were a lot of people standing there, and a lot of men, and she just stood there. Everyone could see her breasts. Her hijab was also viciously ripped off. I can't forget that scene to this day. I didn't have time to take my earrings off, they pulled them off so viciously that my ears started bleeding and they didn't care.
12. We were then taken into a cell. We were required to walk inside the yellow line. We were surrounded by police officers leading us along. I was naive enough to think that they would be a little kind, a little compassionate, a little merciful, and I told the policeman that this was the second time I had come in, so why had it changed so much here now. The policeman was very angry and shouted at me, saying that I should shut up and that I would be made to suffer well after I went in. After we passed, we saw many buildings. They took us into the iron gate, and we went into the fourth cell. The door was not open, it was half open, so we had to squeeze through the door, and if someone couldn't get in, they were kicked in. Our cell was particularly crowded, with more than twenty people. It was especially dark inside. Some of us slept on the floor, and some on the boards. We were all very frightened and afraid. We could only go to the toilet once a day and there was a bucket inside the cell. There was a small window in our cell where we could see outside. From it, I saw people entering the camp. Every day for four or five days, thousands and thousands of people were brought in.
13. We only had three minutes to go to the bathroom. Once a woman was in the bathroom and the policeman told her to come out quickly, she said she had an

upset stomach, and the policeman went in and beat her severely. We were so scared. The small bucket inside our cell was also used to go to the toilet, without a lid. The cell was small and there was no ventilation. The environment was so bad, you can't even imagine. I once told a policeman that this bucket was toxic when left without a lid. He replied that I should be glad that they did not let us drink that. There were two armed policemen at the entrance of each cell.

14. In the cell across from us, there were 2-3 Kazakh women who kept crying, saying that she was a citizen of Kazakhstan and that she was not a Uyghur and why she was being arrested. The police just kept threatening her to take her to a more horrible place. As a result, she disappeared after three days. We don't even know where she went. But we all knew there was no chance of anyone getting out at that time. Since then, they were totally disappeared, and I have no further information about them.
15. I was interrogated by the police many times. They asked me the same question again and again, "which organization have you contacted? What kind of relationship do you have with Uyghurs in America?" They threatened me to tell the truth, and they tied me to a stool and interrogated me. Even though I had been telling the truth, they did not trust what I told them. Later they took me to a different cell. The whole cell was made of iron. It was a new cell. The corridor was about two hundred meters. It was very long. There were a lot of people in there. It was very crowded. We could see inside those cells when we passed by, and it was all very crowded, full of people. When we were led along, there were armed policemen standing on both sides of the aisle, with real bullets, every five steps or so there was an armed policeman. There was nothing inside that iron cell. No blankets, no mattresses. It was very, very cold inside.
16. We were forced to go in and take a shower with cold water. We were all in a sick state. I had a high fever at that time. When I had a fever, I fell down and the policeman who was guarding us went to call the woman who was in charge of us. When she came over, she was very angry and said why didn't I just die. The police officer in charge had no other rights, they were only in charge of guarding. I was just thrown aside, I wanted to drink water and there was no water, they tried to give me toilet water, I didn't drink.
17. Every night, girls would disappear. One of the girls in our cell was taken away at night and never came back. In the cell across from us, one morning a girl went crazy, she kept pulling her hair and slapping herself, and then someone came and gave her a sedative. She started hitting herself again after a while. They took her away, and they said they took her to the psychiatric hospital.
18. We would have four or five cells taken to class together, and the teachers who gave us the class would brainwash us. They then taught us about the law, about the communist law, and told us not to have children, that people who have children in the future are punishable by law, and so on. We thought our situation would be better after we went over there. But we were in a very bad situation over here. We were not fed. They didn't feed us.
19. They also give us all kinds of vaccinations at every turn. Every fifteen days we

had to be vaccinated and then we had to take medication under police surveillance. A lot of people started to become delirious after that. After taking the medication, I just didn't know anything. I couldn't think about anything. I couldn't do anything. It was a kind of confusion. I can only describe the effect. There were 2 types of pills that we had to swallow. One makes you feel really groggy and tired. The other one makes you feel like something is moving under your skin. They are white in colour. They were given to us as vitamins. However, you get very thirsty with these pills. Then many women have interrupted their periods. By one woman even more than 8 months. Her name was Aliya. Another woman conversely came to much blood. Her name was Roshangul. We didn't get it how it worked. With me, I don't see because of pills, I see because of beatings. I got a lot of bleeding. I think the pills were for sterilization on the one hand and on the other control minds.

20. There was a big bus inside the camp I could see from the cell window. The bus was equipped with lab and medical instruments and used for performing medical test for camp detainees. I saw healthy people entering the bus come out in a bad condition.
21. One woman was taken for interrogation and she came back after three days. When she came back, she could only lie down, and she couldn't stand up or sit up at all. The rules there were to sit straight every day, there was no way we would be allowed to lie down. It turned out that day those police officers said she could lie down and rest for an hour. We all wondered what had happened. The next day I went to ask her what had happened, and she ended up hugging me and crying, she couldn't say anything, just crying, I thought she must have been beaten, must have been beaten too much. But when she went to take a shower, I saw her body and I realized what had happened to her, because it didn't take long for the same thing to happen to me.
22. We were transferred there on the 10 May 2018, and that's when this interrogation started. I was brought in for interrogation less than a few days later. I always thought the woman was beaten up, but I ended up resisting the police when I was interrogated, and at the very beginning they just interrogated me, and that room was a dark room, and I didn't know what time it was. When I was being interrogated, they beat me severely and pulled my hair. A Kazakh policeman brought me food, I refused to eat, and I started to resist. I asked him why he didn't go and ask my husband these questions, why he asked me, he was the one who took me out of the country. I didn't even know what World Uyghur Congresses were at that time. We don't have access to this information in China. I was in a state of mental breakdown, so I pulled the policeman and told him this, and then a Han policeman came and kicked me directly in the head, and I fell down, and he kept kicking me in the stomach and head, and I felt that my stomach was split open. He cursed me and kicked me, he said all these Uyghur are like this, they should be treated like this, and then he kept kicking me, and then I passed out. I woke up and found myself in my own cell. I felt like I was going to die, and I felt like my whole insides were splitting open. My roommates took me to the bathroom, and I saw that I was bleeding constantly. My roommates ran to the police and told them that I was bleeding constantly, and the police didn't care, saying that it was normal. After that my stomach kept

hurting. This pain lasted for a month or two.

23. Even though I was in that situation, they took me in for questioning. It was the same dark room, and there was another woman in our cell who was taken with me, and she was in the room next to mine, and I heard her screaming so badly that I thought she was being beaten. That sound was very miserable. It was terrible, very tragic. Then I was interrogated all the time, just asking me if I confessed, what I had done, and so on, and in the middle of that some police officers said I was still in a bleeding state, and they didn't care, and they took me to the next room. I didn't even think they would torture me like that, or that they would use a taser at all. After I was brought in, there were three police officers, and they did that to me, and once they did it together, and I have no words to describe the inhuman cruelty of the violence, they didn't just beat me, and they didn't just satisfy their sexual desires, I remember clearly, they did that to me three times, and once they used those iron bars, electric shock wands. They raped me by inserting iron bars, electric batons, and other equipment into my genitals. I have no way to explain to you exactly what kind of equipment, anyway - it is the same as to pull out your intestines, internal organs. For my own sexual assault, once by them with these electric rods, iron bars and other devices, and three times by them artificial rape. The first time, I was raped by all three of them together. I remember it very clearly. I can't cry and I can't die, I must see them pay for this. But I am already a walking corpse, my soul and heart are dead. A young woman was taken out with me at that time, but after she came back, the woman was already delirious, just like crazy, not talking at all, not doing anything, not saying anything. I was taken out a few more times not long afterwards. They were also tortured in the same way. I also realized why the woman's body was so bruised and battered, just like the skin was torn open by a few dogs. So that's what they say it was like in there. It was all torture; it was all abuse. It was all inhuman abuse and torture.
24. They gave us rice water to drink. We had no food to eat, and it was very terrible. None of us had ever experienced such hunger. I was on my knees praying for the police to give us something to eat. It happened that another teacher was on duty that day. That teacher was also a cadre and was assigned to be a teacher there. She was a Uyghur teacher, and after she saw me, she took pity on me and went back to look for something, but she didn't find anything but a mouldy bread. When I wanted to eat, I saw the woman beside me looking at me pitifully, I shared half of it with her, and we cried together while licking the bread.
25. The camp inmates are divided into different categories. Each category has its own colours. For example, blue, yellow and red uniform. We wore blue uniform and our camp conditions were most tolerable compared to the others. I saw and heard much worse criminals compared to the others. For example, when I was in the medical room of the camp, where I frequently went because of my health condition, I saw the Red uniforms. They were even in the camp hospital with handcuffs and ankle chains. I could not imagine how they are doing in the cells, because I was always allowed to move in the camp hospital without handcuffs. I overheard what the guards used to say about the conditions in the cells of the Red Uniformed prisoners. They said that meals are often not given out there and many prisoners suffer from hunger. Some even die of starvation. For a

month they tortured us with such measures. We were given very little food. You can't call it food; it was a black rice water with a small piece of bread. Day by day they gave us less and less.

26. So, within these three months from May to August 2018, such small tortures were constant. For example, they cut our hair, we had to put out our hair from the food flap and let them cut it. If we refused, they punished us. Then they forced us to put a contraceptive spiral in our organs. Then they made us take a lot of pills, but we didn't know what they were for. After everything happened as they wanted, they gave meals again; but the meals were very poor in nutrients. Before the meal, we would have to give the oath of loyalty to the party and thank the PRC. Every day we were witnesses of inhuman treatment of us. Some could not bear it and went crazy. In the end they ended up in hospitals for the mentally unstable. At least we got told so. However, to this day we do not know what happened to those who dropped out of the so-called studies.
27. I was moved again to another cell in September or October 2018. I stayed there until I was released from camp. This building was in the same complex where I was before. In these cells we were always twelve inmates.
28. I could see through the small slit what was happening in the corridors. It was a long corridor, on both sides were our cells, in the middle of the corridor there was another partition. So to speak, a corridor off the main corridor. Through these corridors, the management of the camp or other officials went. So, at night, unknown people came in the suits and with mouth masks, although there was no Corona pandemic yet. They always appeared in the corridors accompanied by police officers or security personnel of the camp. At first, I thought it was some security check or something. I couldn't imagine that these people were singling out women for gang rape. But you could see at night that they were coming and going with a couple of captured women through the corridors. There was among the men who raped me one with the suit. I came to this conclusion because almost every day such visits of masked men in suits took place only at night. They take us to the interview room, because only in these rooms there are no cameras, and there their animal pleasures happen. Also, during the interrogations there is often abuse and sexual harassment.
29. When I was transferred last time, our so-called teachers came and made the lists of the people who have a profession, for example in the textile industry. At that time, we saw this as an opportunity for getting out from the camp and were happy to be on these lists. Now I know that they were the lists of forced laborers. I was lucky that one of my teachers, a Kazakh, warned me about it and told me to not register for these lists, as many of these women will never come back. I listened to her and didn't sign up.
30. One day, they came with the lists of prisoners whose relatives live abroad. I was also included on this list. I didn't know my husband was fighting for my release in Kazakhstan. I was reintroduced to the interrogation room. I thought the abuse was going to start all over again. However, to my surprise, they were kind and questioned me normally. That was on 24<sup>th</sup> December 2018, after which I was taken away for interrogation. This was one day before my release.

However, this time the interrogation was in the classroom and not in the interrogation room. Two policemen or intelligence officers, a Kazakh woman and a Chinese woman named Li Lan, were waiting for me there. They dictated to me all day what I should say. I should not tell any stories about camp life. I should only thank the Party and tell everyone outside that I had enjoyed good and successful re-education. I signed 2 pages of my confessions and my video was recorded, where I praised the party and thanked it. Actually, I should have been happy, but that night before my release, all I wanted to do was cry. I thought of my friends in the camp.

31. As for the inmates who died, I can tell you that one of the ladies in our cell died due to her uterus bleeding and was taken away. We learned that she died. Then we could see that corpses were taken away from one or another cell. People in white uniforms came and transferred the bodies. From the detention until I was released, I could estimate that over 100 women had died there.

### **Monitoring and Surveillance Following Release**

32. Outside, my sister and 2 policemen or intelligence officers were waiting for me. They gave me my identity card and accompanied us to my sister's house. Later, they said that they would also spend the night there. I was very indignant, but my sister said, "Be glad that you are out! Let them sleep here".
33. Then, I rented an apartment in an area designated by them. There, they, a man and a woman lived with me. After a month, they let me call my husband in Kazakhstan. They did not return my old cell phone. I should buy everything new. All my old things, they did not give me back. On the first call, I couldn't talk at all, I just cried. After a few days I should call him again and tell him that I am fine. They said they would make some videos of me, how happy I was buying in the supermarket, how happy I was walking through the city. They also returned my passport later, but it was invalid, and I had to apply for a new one. I knew how hard it is to apply for a passport for a Uyghur. That's why I said I wasn't going anywhere. They said it was very fast and I didn't have to deal with any bureaucratic hurdles. And it was really like that, I just had to go from one door to another and I got all the stamps and signatures without any request! I could not believe that they would let me out of the country.
34. During the month of Ramadan, these two wanted me to drink with them. I said that I was sick, and I couldn't, but they still forced me to drink a sip of alcohol during Ramadan. Then I was filmed drinking alcohol and it was published on WeChat. That's why I tell my people here abroad, please don't criticize our people if they are so happy on social media and drink alcohol. They do it all forced.
35. When I received passport, they filmed me again. I had to spread their propaganda again. Then they scanned my face, recorded my voice, took my blood. When the whole procedure was finished, I had to apply for Kazakh visa. This was a long and complicated procedure. I was granted a Kazakhstani visa on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2019 and went to Kazakhstan on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2019.

36. The regional police officer who had been monitoring me started to call me very soon in Kazakhstan. First, they threatened me by SMS not to meet with strangers, to keep silent about everything that happened there. Then they threatened me with the arrest of my relatives. Then they tried to kill me in our rented house in Kazakhstan. They set fire to the rented house.
37. I was always afraid of being killed. So, I decided to go to the American Consulate in Almaty. I explained my situation and told them what was happening to me and that I was being threatened and they would not give me any peace even here in Kazakhstan. I still had Chinese citizenship and could be deported at any time by the Kazakh authorities. But the American Embassy assured me that I will not be deported, however they said they can't guarantee to bring me to the USA.
38. As for my health condition, I can say that even in Kazakhstan I went to the doctors. I also flew to Turkey to have an operation to remove my uterus. But it cost a lot for each examination. In the end I thought I was going to die. I was operated only in the United States. I was also diagnosed with tuberculosis here. I am sure that I got these diseases from the consequence of my imprisonment in the camps. What the Chinese propaganda says are lies, I have all my medical tests and can prove that I was operated only in the USA.

Everything I have told; I testify with my name. I testify to have experienced, seen and heard the above happenings. Everything I have told is the truth and only the truth without any exaggeration or estimation.