

# **Witness Statement**

## **Shemsinur Abdighafur**

### **Female Age 48**

1. My name is Shemsinur Abdighafur. I am a Uyghur Muslim and I started working as a Doctor in February 1992 first in the Laskuy hospital in Hotan. I left China on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2010 and now reside in Turkey. In my time working in hospitals in China I witnessed and heard about a lot of forced sterilisations and forced abortions of Uyghur women.

### **Early Career**

2. I graduated from a Uyghur medicine school and afterwards, in February 1992, I was assigned to the Laksuy hospital as a nurse in the theatre operating unit. I was assigned as a nurse and not a doctor because my subject was Uyghur medicine which does not fit in with Western medicine practices. In the operating theatre unit, I witnessed three to five abortions and sterilisation surgeries on women a day. I witnessed a lot of things in the operating theatre unit, most of them abortions. All abortions were carried out by Chinese doctors. Sometimes if there was nobody else Uyghur doctors would do it. Five months after I got the job, I got pregnant and was moved to the mother and baby care unit.
3. In June 1993 I was sent to a district hospital (one level higher than a county hospital) for western medicine training. It is the largest hospital in Hotan; it is called the District People's Hospital of Hotan. In this hospital I went to the gynaecology unit for further training. In this hospital I witnessed more than twenty forced abortions and forced sterilisations a day carried out by Chinese doctors. The doctor in charge of sterilisations in this hospital was called Guo Jian Xia.
4. After six months in the District People's Hospital, I went back to Laksuy hospital's mother and care unit for two months. I am a Muslim and the things I saw were against my religion, so I refused to work in that hospital and in March 1994 I started my own private A&E clinic. It belonged to me but was under the

hospital's administration. I had to pay the hospital my salary so I could have the clinic.

5. From 1999 to 2001 I went to the Xinjiang Medical University, Adult Education Centre. During this time, I had a 6-month internship at Hotan City Hospital (which is one level lower than the District Hospital). Here I also witnessed lots of abortions and sterilisations.
6. In 2004 I went to Yilqi Hospital and also witnessed lots of forced sterilisation and abortion. In my time working in hospitals, we could sometimes hear that some babies were born, and they started crying and from this we knew they were alive. But we knew all babies would be given the injection so we knew they would die before they got home.
7. I left China on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2010. From starting at the hospital until leaving China there was not an increase or decrease in sterilisations and abortions but there were lots.

#### Forced abortion case 1

8. In around September 2002 the wife of my husband's friend from Karakax was pregnant, and they didn't want other people to know as they were already exceeding the two-child policy. They wanted to hide because they may face punishment or even jail. So, they came to Hotan City to our house to hide. I could have helped deliver the baby at home but the authorities from Karakax Town came looking for them and since they knew my husband was their friend they came to our house. When they came, they took her to the Hotan City Hospital. I spoke to the hospital director and I asked him to let us keep this baby alive. We made a deal with other Uyghur doctors in that hospital that we will keep the mother inside the room away from the law enforcement officers. And we told them that this woman needs special care so that we could keep her inside and deliver the baby. At this moment there was another pregnant woman who came to give birth, but I think the authorities had killed her baby by injecting her. I asked permission to take the dead baby to show the authorities and to save my husband's friends baby. I was outside with my husband, my husband's brother and law enforcement people. Our aim was to help my husband's friends baby be born alive. We asked the parents of the dead baby for help and said we can use this other baby to save another baby. The parents agreed and we took the dead baby and showed it to the law enforcement people and said look this is dead. My husband's friends baby was born and delivered but early.

Because this baby was born only seven months old, special care was needed. But if we sent it to the special care unit all the nurses were Chinese so our trick would have been exposed so we decided to take the baby with us, and the baby died four hours later.

### Forced abortion case 2

9. In January or February 2004 there was another case where a pregnant woman who already had two children wanted to avoid being caught by the authorities came to us to hide. Because we were living in apartment blocks it was easy to hide the woman because everything was inside, so you didn't need to go out. After hiding with us for two months it was time to give birth. Since our last experience we decided to go to a private hospital and not a state hospital. When we came to the private hospital the doctor said the baby was too small, so we needed to give it some nutrients. The mother stayed for one week. It is not convenient for a pregnant woman to come and go, it was also dangerous to stay in my place and we could not stay at the hospital because a pregnant woman is an easy target. So, we negotiated with a Uyghur family who were neighbours to the private hospital. The family were happy to hide the women. But unfortunately, because she had to go to the private hospital to have injections and check-ups somebody found her and told the authorities. The authorities came and searched this private hospital. They injected something that makes the womb contract to help the baby come out. They did this injection so that her womb would be forcibly contracted. Since she was not due, her twins died. That mother was bleeding so much they did an operation where they gave blood to the mother and took the dead babies out and saved the mother's life. I wasn't there because I was doing good things for all Uyghur women. I had to hide from the scene, so I wasn't there. Two months later I met that woman and she told me.

### Forced abortion case 3

10. Now we come to my hospital. One day in the Spring of 2005 the authorities brought another woman and I was sitting at the registration desk. I had to register and take people's details; nobody could go in without my consent. The authorities came to the hospital for a secret inspection without telling us. But they came a lot, so we knew who they were, and they knew we knew them. Sometimes they would come disguised. This day they came disguised and they slipped my eye, and they went in. I saw a man sitting there crying. I asked him why he was crying, and he said they are going to inject something in to my pregnant wife. I said go in as quickly as possible and get your wife and run

away through another door. Because that man was already registered on my books, I deleted his registration because if I didn't if the authorities found out it would be my responsibility because I let him in. So, I deleted it and said take your wife and run away through another door and if you can't climb a wall; you can't stay here. I have helped a lot of Uyghur women by doing these kinds of things. That man later went in, but it was too late the injection had already been done. This happens a lot and since we were working for the state the local people didn't trust us as they thought we were working for the state. So, they even swore at us and told us we are the dogs of the Chinese, but they didn't know our real feelings. So, the relationship was not great. This case was so sad; I couldn't save the baby. If the man had told me earlier, I would have saved the baby, but I couldn't.

11. The injection is something called Rivanol and it is designed to kill the baby. If any women got injected with this the baby died. The syringe and the needle are very long, and it is directly injected in to the womb. When they put the needle in, they see if a liquid comes out, if it does it confirms it is in the right place. I witnessed the injection being done. It was done daily. It is very hard to say exactly how many a day because the authorities started doing it secretly and independently because Uyghur doctors were hiding patients and saving babies. But roughly it was three to five a day. The hospital staff didn't give full dosages so sometimes the baby was born alive. But many times, the authorities will give extra dosages to make sure the baby is dead. Later on, we started playing the trick of helping patients give birth by avoiding the authorities. We saved many babies, so the authorities stopped us doing it and every single case after that was done by the authorities. They stopped trusting us. Since my department was mother and baby care, we did not give injections. But I often went to the other unit to observe. Since the doctors and staff were my friends they allowed me to be there. But later on, since the Planned Birth authorities took over the unit, I lost this chance to witness. This planned control office was an independent office. They were more powerful than the hospital so they could do whatever they wanted.

#### Forced abortion case 4

12. In May 2013 my sister-in-law who was Uyghur had two children and was pregnant with twins. As it was her third pregnancy it was considered illegal. Because her pregnancy was due, and she couldn't give birth in her own village she went to Karakax Town to give birth without being noticed back home. When she came to Karakax County Hospital to give birth she thought her secret would not be discovered. But she was little and naïve. When she showed her national

registration number the doctor and the nurse from that hospital immediately understood she had another two kids. Then when she came to the hospital, they took her in and gave a syringe. After 15 minutes the mother and both the unborn babies were dead. I didn't witness this, but my husband told me because he was her brother. When my sister-in-law was taken to the hospital my husband was with them. My sister-in-law was very healthy and had no medical condition and just died like that. My husband waited together with my sister-in-law's husband and just after 15 minutes, less than half an hour a dead body came out. The hospital said she had a heart condition, but I am a Doctor, my sister-in-law was thirty years old, and I know she didn't have a medical condition. The family took the body and they buried her and had a funeral.

### Personal case

13. In January 2005 my father died. Then in March because of that sadness I got ill. I went for a check-up and they suspected I had a tumour in my womb. I went to Urumqi for treatment in 2006 or 2007 or 2008 for further examination and treatment. In September 2008 in Urumqi they said I had adenomyosis and a tumour. They scared me and said if you don't remove your whole womb it will spread everywhere and become cancer; so, they removed it. Afterwards the pathology report said there was no cancer so the treatment could have been differently by only removing a small tumour and leaving my whole womb. So, I wanted to sue them, but the doctor was a Uyghur doctor, so I decided not to cause damage to them. That doctor who removed my womb was begging me by saying "each doctor has to remove around two thousand wombs a year. That is our job, we have to do that". Since she was begging me, I decided not to press charges. The doctor was doing a master's degree, so she needed to have at least two thousand cases. That is why she did it. Since the hospital was under the control of the government it might be a government policy. The hospital in Urumqi was a tumour hospital but I cannot tell you the name of the doctor. 70% of Uyghur females in the Hotan area had their wombs removed. If the authorities found anything in the womb, they used any excuse to remove it. In Urumqi I guess it was the same, if a Uyghur woman has a little problem in the womb, they remove it. I got the statistic from my own experience of real-life stories. When I was working in the mother and childcare unit three out of four Uyghur women will tell you they don't have a womb. Sometimes due to the heavy workload of the birth control department we came to give a hand. That is how I knew many Uyghur women don't have wombs.

### Forced assimilation case

14. I went to the Hotan Uyghur Medical School from 2006 to 2007. I then went for an internship at the Hotan Uyghur Medicine Hospital. While I was there, there was an episode with a Uyghur woman who came to the hospital and was diagnosed with a mental disorder. I collected all the women's details. The reason she was mad was because she was a teacher and in her school all the Uyghur teachers were brought together and forcibly taught by the authorities about how great the Communist party is. She had to write a statement about how great the Communist party is three or four times, but she could not write it to a satisfactory level because every statement was turned back. That statement had to be no less than 5,000 words. So, you have to rewrite every sentence that is not approved by the authorities. You have to criticise yourself and criticise your wrongdoing. That teacher went mad because she couldn't find things to write down. We did an assessment of the teacher and we worked out this is why she is mad.

#### Family situation

15. In September 1993 my brother was kicked out of school for putting Kashgar as the capital city on a map. He started mingling with people who taught him Uyghur history and then he felt like he needed to do something to liberate his country, so he made a bomb which his friend put under someone's table and injured a Chinese man. My brother was 14 years old, but they investigated and processed him as if he were 20 years old and sentenced him to life imprisonment.

16. Another brother in 2016 took my mother to Turkey and then 15 days later he returned home and was arrested and sentenced to 10 years imprisonment. The accusation was he had been to Turkey. Then my mother went back two months later. Since then, I have lost all information about my mother and brother. Now I have no information about my relatives. No picture or telephone number. I know nothing about all my relatives. The Chinese authorities haven't contacted me or put pressure on me as I don't have a telephone. But my husband told me they came to the house and intimidated my whole family and made my mother denounce her relationship with me. I never use a mobile phone; I only use the telephone in the street so they cannot contact me or intimidate me.

**The interviewer asked the witness whether s/he had understood the contents of the statement and whether s/he agreed with its contents.**

**The witness confirmed that she agreed with the contents of this statement orally on 23<sup>rd</sup> February at 18:00 (GMT).**