

Witness Statement

Gulbahar Jelilova

Female Age 57

1. I was born in Almaty, Kazakhstan on the 4th of April 1964. I have been in clothing business for nearly 20 years buying from Chinese manufactures and exporting to Kazakhstan.
2. In May 2017 I received a phone call from my business associate's daughter who told me that my Goods had arrived from Mainland China and I need to go to Urumqi as soon as possible to arrange the shipment to Kazakhstan as the storage charge is very high. I travelled by bus from Almaty to Urumqi, arriving on the evening of the 21st of May and stayed in a Hotel. The next morning three policemen arrested me in my Hotel room. I was taken to the police station where I was interrogated the whole day before I was taken to No.3 prison in Urumqi at around 11:30 pm.
3. First experience with the police was on 22nd May 2017 in Urumqi, at 8 am three policemen came to my room, asking where my passport is and when did I arrive in Urumqi. I had been asked these questions before and did not think there was anything special about this. I went to collect my passport from the reception and they didn't look at my passport at all. I was asked to go to the national security office.
4. So, I went to the national security office and brought to a room where they took my mobile phone. There is a special device which they use to capture everything on my phone including messages. The interrogation lasted from 8am until 3pm. Then after I was taken to the basement and there were a lot of interrogation rooms. I was taken to an iron chair and I was made to sit on this chair. After this my hands and feet were tied, and they began the interrogation. As I didn't speak Chinese there was another man, over 50 who was translating.
5. As they found nothing on the phone that I had called any Uyghurs in the region, they asked questions like when I bought my phone. I answered 1.5 years ago. They also asked if I practice my religion, with whom do I have contact and these kinds of questions. And also, whether my children pray 5 times a day. They also asked me if I have ever been to Turkey, to which I replied I live in a free country, and, it is my business and why do you ask these questions. They took a bar and beat me and told me that this is we ask questions not you, so you have to answer questions and don't ask anything back. The whole interrogation was about the documentation and they asked me to sign a paper by 11pm. I told them I do not understand this language as I studied in Russian and so I will not sign unless you bring a lawyer and translator. I resisted signing the paper. I was

shown official documentation from the police which read that I came to Urumqi on 21st May 2017 and on 22nd May I was arrested for the charge of terrorism. I did not know what was on the paper and I refused to sign it. They then beat me again with a wooden stick and they said if I don't sign it, they would take me to a place so they can force me to sign.

6. The police accused me of transferring 17,000 yuan (£2000) from China to an organisation referred as Nur, which is based in Turkey. I told the police that I have never heard of such organisation and I have never transferred money from China to Turkey. But the police insisted that I was lying, after many hours of interrogation forcing me to confess to their accusations, I refused to admit to any of them as I have never been involved in such things. I told them: "You can kill me; you can do whatever you want. I'm just a businesswoman." At the end they said: "We will let you think this over." I was forced changing into a yellow prison uniform before being handcuffed and a black hood placed over my head and taken to so called Sankan, the Number 3 prison in Urumqi which was turned into an all-female camp a week prior to my arrival. I was held there for three months then taken to No. 2 detention centre in Urumqi before being transferred to a women's prison until I was released in September 2018.
7. As I refused, two people then dragged me to a police car. I thought at the start they would take me to the hotel but instead they brought me to another place. Inside there were a lot of military people and I realised I was in the prison in Urumqi, Dawan.
8. After I arrived in prison there, two people dragged me to the innermost area of the prison and behind the door there was a Uyghur lady who was on the post and I was registered on to a computer. They took my Kazakhstani passport away and replaced it with what appeared like an official Chinese ID card that had my photo. They stated that it proves I am a Uyghur from Xinjiang. They pressured me to memorize my new ID number. I was given a Chinese identity card and so I was registered as a Chinese citizen, with a Chinese identity number on it. This is place for people who have the death penalty. As I was charged with terrorism, I thought I was going to get the death penalty.
9. There was a periodic re-registration of people in the cell. Each time I gave my passport number from Kazakhstan and they would tell me off and order me to look at the wall for 4-5 hours because I didn't use my Chinese ID number. I would have to redo it using the Chinese ID number I had been given.
10. I was then taken to a room, there I had to take off all my clothes and turn around three times. I had to put my own clothes in a bag, and I was given new clothes, which was military uniform. I was then given a bottle and I was asked to urinate in the small bottle at the corner of the room. Everyone was looking at me doing this. I later learnt this was used to check whether I was pregnant or not.

11. They also took my blood. There was a strange instrument, a piece of wood always moving around taking my photos. The urine control was important to the guards and had they found I was pregnant then they would have made me have an immediate abortion at this point. I saw this happen a lot of times to women there and shared a room with other women who explained they were pregnant and had to have immediate abortions.
12. Then I was taken to room number 704. It was a very long corridor, every 3 or 4 rooms there was an iron gate and the guards had to open them to pass through. At the end of the corridor, I arrived at a room. I spent the rest of 1 year 3 months and 10 days in this room. The doors were double doors, the outer doors were iron gates and when you open the door there is another door inside like iron bars which was chained to the wall so you cannot open them. To enter the room, you have to lower the head so as not to hit it on the iron chain. Before I can enter the police pushed me into the room. When I was in the room it was long and narrow with more than 20 ladies. They were lying on the ground on top of each other as there was not enough space for everyone to fit.
13. The conditions of all three detention centres were overcrowded and dirty, there were girls as young as 14 and women as old as 80 in my cell. There were over 30 inmates cramped in a 14 square metre cell, we took turns to sleep every night because there wasn't enough space for everyone to lie down. A dozen or more women stood while others slept in shifts throughout the night. If we want to go to the toilet, we have to do it when we are standing.
14. I looked at the ladies lying on the ground and since they had not combed their hair for a long time, they all looked mad. I thought they had taken me to a place for insane people. I was shouting and crying, but a lady responsible for this room asked me not to cry and shout or I would be punished. This lady was also an inmate but as she spoke good Chinese, she was given this position to take charge of the room. As she was speaking a lot with a mixture of Chinese, I did not understand so I did not stop crying and shouting. Another lady told me to be quiet and not to cry as we are not guilty, and we are brought here as normal Uyghur people. I then understood and calmed down.
15. The room was 7x3x6m. There is a wooden plank on the ground and there is a 10cm wide metal piece on the wood every 50cm along the wood so we cannot sleep down very freely, so we had to lie on our sides to sleep. The metal stuck out of the wood and caused pain throughout the night so we would be in pain. There were four cameras on the ceiling and we were always watched. In all detention centres, there are no areas free from the surveillance of closed-circuit cameras.
16. At 5.30am a siren woke us up and they have to immediately stand up and be ready immediately or we will get punished. We have to sit in three rows towards the wall and sit there until 8am. Then at 8am, whilst there are about 40 people in the room, everyone had 1 minute to go to the toilet, wash our hands and

wash our faces. At 8.50am we would stand in the line and start singing patriotic songs and marches until 9am. It is precisely planned activities in the morning. We were not permitted to talk to one another. Most of the time during the day, we had to stare at the blank walls.

17. At 9am there is a breakfast. And the food was nothing that a human being should eat, the bread as hard as stone and soup made of water and cornflour. It was often mouldy on the inside of the bread. We would get a thin porridge. There is a bowl of porridge which is pushed through the hole in the door and porridge poured into it. Half of it lands in the bowl and half on the ground. There are about 3 to 3.5kg for 40 people so each person gets about 100g of porridge. The porridge is not eatable as it was not cooked enough but we have to eat it anyway as we were hungry.
18. It takes us 20 minutes, so we are ready around 9.20. after this we had to sing a patriot songs and national anthem until 10am. At 10am there is an inspection from the authorities who check every room with 10 police and everyone is interrogated so if there is a new person they will ask and if someone leaves they will control this. Control and inspection ends at 12 noon. When I was first brought to the room my feet were not chained and appeared for inspection without chains. Then at 12pm a person came to the door I had to put my feet through the door, and they put about 5kg chains onto my feet, so I lived my whole time in the camp with that chain on my feet. In the room there were young ladies whose hands were chained to their feet so they could not stand up straight, so they had to bend when they walk.
19. There was no water in the room. When we went to the toilet there is nothing to clean with so we had to clean ourselves with our hands. What made the circumstances much more intolerable was that we were not allowed to wash regularly. We could only have a shower once a week in which we all had to finish within 40 minutes. They gave us just one bar of soap. Each time, two people showered together. It was not really possible to wash properly in such short period of time and with such a limited amount of soap. Because of the lack of hygiene filthiness, we developed body sores. Because no one could take a shower everyone's body was full of lice.
20. Every week, twice a week, we got some medicine. We have to take it immediately with the water they give us to accompany it. We had to show our hands. They also took some blood just after we received this medication.
21. In the evening between 7-10.30pm we had time to learn 5 patriotic songs and we have to repeat them again and again to learn them. During this time, I discussed with other ladies from different rooms. Everyone said this medicine stopped their periods as no ladies had their periods after they took the medicine. We were forced to take pills which had the effect of disorientation, loss of concentration, subdued, you couldn't even think about your parents or children. These tablets additionally stopped our menstrual cycle.

22. It was hard enough to survive on. I also forgot how food tastes as I had no sense of taste after the amount of time. We were given three tiny meals a day: One small, steamed bun and watery cornmeal soup for breakfast, one small, steamed bun and watery cabbage soup for lunch, and one small, steamed bun and watery cabbage soup for dinner. After some time, I did not know if I was hungry or full. I was in a dreamlike state due to the trauma as I got used to the situation it was as if I had always lived in this room.
23. On one occasion we were given uncooked steamed buns, it just stuck in our mouths. We buzzed the prison guard on the intercom and informed them we can't eat the steamed buns. They replied saying, 'this is a detention center not your home. Don't you know where you are? In your home you can pick and choose but here you eat what is given. Perhaps you're too full that is why you're being fussy.'
24. Following this complaint, they punished us by giving us only steamed buns and water for one week, no soup. And then they accused us of speaking Uyghur. They also punished people in other cells for a similar reason. They said, 'you are forbidden to speak Uyghur, only speak Chinese.' They would feed us only if we spoke Chinese.
25. After 3 months there was another activity and the ladies were taken to a place to get an ultrasound. Each time there was an ultrasound check, the ladies were taken a place in another prison in the area. Every two ladies are chained together, and they are taken to a bus and taken to the controlled area. It was usual for ladies in the room come back from the interrogation. But some did not come back.
26. A number of women suffered serious complications. They fainted from the lack of food, had seizure, and mental breakdowns. I witnessed younger ladies screaming, and hitting their heads against the wall, smearing faeces on the wall, and refusing commands. Those ladies were taken away and disappeared. Some of them did not come back. One lady, 25 years old, was in the prison because when her sister was in Egypt giving birth, she stayed in Egypt to help her sister for two months. They interrogated her very often and asked whether she met anyone. They beat her during the interrogation. They beat her on the head. Two policemen brought her in the room in the corner and they told us not to touch her as she couldn't stand. Someone tried to comfort her and touched her head and she asked them to stop. She realised her head was like rotten meat, it was completely full of wounds. After 3 days she lost consciousness and she was taken away.
27. There was another lady from the south (East Turkestan), she was 36 years old. Her fingernails had been removed. It was unbearable to see that. There were a lot of young ladies whose fingernails had been removed during interrogation. Because of this I was crying all the time. Other girls tried to comfort me. A lady

was brought to this camp according to the police because she came to Urumqi for work while she was supposed to stay in the south.

28. The room conditions were very bad and the air was polluted due to the toilets. One day a lady lost consciousness and they called the doctor to help but the next half an hour no one came. A lady tried to assist her. After half an hour two policeman and a doctor arrived and looked at the door and asked why the lady was comforting her. They took that lady away. She came back after a week and was no longer talking for several days. I asked her where she went for a week. She said she was in the 'dark room'. This was the first time I heard the word 'dark room'. Later I learnt this was a dark place. It is a 1x1m cage made with iron bars where you cannot stand, and you have to sit all the time. There was water flowing beneath this cage. She stayed all week in this cage. She had to go to the toilet directly through the holes in the cage. She got steamed bread and some water through the cage bar. There were a lot of mice around and if she was not careful, they would come and bite her. She would try to sleep but the mice would come and bite her so she had to defend herself. There was barely any sunlight in the dark room.
29. Another lady was taken to the dark room. After this she went insane and they took her away. Once I was sick and I was in the hospital. There was a girl who asked me which prison I came from. I told her and she told me there was a lady who was brought to her in a chair after being in the dark room and they were made to wash her body. She was almost dead, not reacting to anything and then the police took her away.
30. Sometimes they would bring ladies who just had a baby, directly to the prison. Where their breasts were still dripping with milk, so I knew they had a baby recently. Once I asked one of them where her child was? I was told that she gave birth the day before and now she does not know where her child is. She was then given medicine, so she stopped producing milk. After they take the medicine, they always have negative side effects.
31. In the first three months, I was crying and whining all the time and I almost accepted death as my fate. I thought it would be better if I were dead. In order not to have relationship between inmates the guards would rotate inmates from one room to another. I was never in the same room for more than 5 days. This makes it hard to make friends and also hard to know if people disappear. 20 times a day there is a siren in the prison which is very loud and disturbing in the prison.
32. A lady was transferred from another prison to my room, she described the condition in the other prison. This lady was interrogated very often there. Usually, the interrogation room is the second floor. During the interrogation, her feet and hands were chained to the bed and she was beaten with an iron chain until she lost consciousness. then she was unconscious for a few days, unable to eat and drink. Once she was better after a week, the same procedure was

repeated again and again. I was told explicitly that she was raped during the interrogation. Gang rape was regular practice during interrogation according to the other ladies.

33. After 3 months I was taken to the basement. They asked me to sign a paper and then put the bag on my head. I saw a lot of police beside me. I thought I was going to die so I was out of control and I was shaking. I was taken along a long corridor to a room. They took the bag off and then chained me to a chair by my hands and feet with a heavy chain. They started interrogating me for the next 24 hours. I had no rest; I could not go to the toilet. It was continuous interrogation. Every 2 hours there was a police rotation. They were trying to make me sign the same paper they had asked me to sign initially. I was very weak after the interrogation and I was given an electric shock or was beaten with a wooden bar as I was falling asleep as I was so weak. I still refused to sign the paper. After 24 hours they removed the chains, and I was asked to stand up. My feet were swollen so I immediately fell down. Then a doctor came and put something to help.

34. I was conscious again and I was brought to a hospital. They asked me to report to the door where they put the black bag on my head again where they brought me to the room 408. There was only one bed in the room with a bedcover and a table and chair. They asked me to sit on the chair where they chained me to the chair. There were three people, one on computer, one translating and one interrogating. They asked me again to sign. I refused and said I need a lawyer. They said I had to sign it to get my freedom. One of the Chinese men removed his trousers and approached me and tried to put his penis in my mouth. I said don't you have a sister and mother and protested. The other Chinese man was beating me. The Kazakh man was telling me 'where did you get the power to ask the questions'. I was brought back to my room again. I was very weak after this and had heart pain and lost consciousness. I then was brought to the hospital again. I was transferred in a police car with iron bars between me and police. It was about 40 minutes to an hour. I tried to remove the bag on my head to see where we were. We were travelling to the hospital which is somewhere in the mountains.

35. I was in the hospital four times after each time I was raped, for 40 days overall in the hospital. The hospital conditions were like the prison. There were iron gates and rooms are blocked with iron bars. In the hospital there were a lot of young people inside. Most people had their heads shaved off and they were chained for screening and ultrasound check.

36. In the hospital there were people with clothes of different colours. Depending on the colour different things happened to them. There were some people in orange clothes, according to a roommate they will be taken away for "sleeping". I asked her why they can't sleep in the room. Then she told me they will be killed via injection. I was very sad to hear that. She also told me they have to

sign a paper before they will be taken away and family members are not informed. Those with blue coloured clothes got a sentence of 15-20 years.

37. There was a 20-year-old lady in hospital who was chained to the chair. She was banging her head against the bed. When she banged her head, the police would beat her. She did this for two days and then she was taken away. I do not know what happened to her. A 25-year-old girl, every two hours someone would take her urine and cleaned her catheter. I was told this was because her kidney was removed. I was then given about 20 pieces of medicine every day and they checked my mouth to make sure I swallowed it.
38. Every 10 days the police would arrive at the door of our cell back in prison and we had to remove our clothes and put our hands on our heads. Sometimes the young girls would start to cry and whine. The police would come with a wooden bar to beat them and say, 'your mind is not clean'.
39. I was released in September 2018 after one year, 3 months and 10 days. I learnt that a letter dated 25 May 2017 was sent to my family in Kazakhstan informing them of my terrorism charges. In May 2017, my family back in Kazakhstan began petitioning for my release. Each day they sent letters to the authorities in Kazakhstan and China. In the end Kazakhstan government managed to influence the Chinese authorities to secure my release.
40. On the day of my release, they called me from the cell placing a hood over my head. I was ordered to stretch out my arms which were shackled. I was taken to the prison hospital where I had physical check. It seemed like the police consulted with the doctor, who said that I couldn't be put on an airplane back to Kazakhstan. I had lost a lot of weight and was very weak. I was kept in the hospital for two days where I was given vitamins and drips. Two days later, the police officer responsible for me came and said, 'You are acquitted.' She removed the shackles. I was only able to eat small amounts when I was first given food in the hotel they transferred me to as my body was too weak to process more food. After 3 days in hotel, they brought me to the national security office and had to sign a lot of papers. I was told to thank China for my release. I was not able to recover my old possessions. I was threatened and told not to say anything about the camps as their 'hand is long enough' and if I talk I will be killed. I had to sign a paper to this effect. They then took me to a hairdresser because my hair was already gray and my face was getting very pale because I hadn't seen the sun in a long time.
41. Xinjiang governor Shohrat Zakir told state-run Xinhua news agency that people detained in the camps "will advance from learning the country's common language to learning legal knowledge and vocational skills." During the time of my 15 months detention, I moved from detention camp to camp, room to room, and never saw anybody spending any time learning something."

42. Later, I moved to Turkey and had three Chinese police following me in Istanbul at one point. I was scared and had to hide at certain points with different Uyghur families. After two years I left Turkey to come to France and received no more threats.

Medical examination

43. On the night of arrival at the No.3 prison, I was stripped naked for a medical examination. They took blood sample and urine sample before placing me in a cell. In less than one week, I along with other prisoners with black hoods over our heads were taken to an unknown place, there was medical equipment in the corridor, we were examined, and blood samples were taken, and we also had ultrasound tests. We were examined once a week stripped naked. I fainted once when I was in the No.3 prison, I was taken to the prison hospital where I saw many other prisoners and we all had medical examinations almost daily. In the No. 2 prison, there is a big medical clinic, we were examined regularly taking blood samples and ultrasound tests. We had injection once every 10 days. On the 27th of August 2018 before I was due to be released, I was taken to a big prison hospital for a check-up.