

**Uyghur Tribunal – Fact witness
statement UTFW2-0595 – Orynbek
Koksebek**

SUMMARY

The witness was born in China but moved to Kazakhstan in 2004 and obtained Kazakh citizenship in 2005. In 2017, he moved back to China, to his hometown, and stayed with his relatives. His village was unrecognizable from even a year before and his own family was afraid to talk to him. The witness was accused of having dual citizenship, which was a crime. He was put under house arrest, after which he was detained for six months. During his term of detention, he was moved between two detention centres.

Initially, he was taken to a building that looked like a hospital, where officials in uniform took his blood pressure, X-rays and performed various check-ups. They also took urine, blood, and stool samples. After that, guards accused him of being a traitor because he had Kazakh citizenship and he was taken to a detention centre. At one point in winter, they put him in a narrow, well-like hole in the ground. His hands were cuffed and cold water was poured over him. He felt he had lost his mind. He was also taken to the “black room” 5 or 6 times. The room was too dark with no light. The floor was cement with nowhere to sleep.

After one and a half months he was taken to a security hospital where he was given an injection on his right shoulder. After that, his health changed. He was tired all the time, he suffered from memory loss and it was hard to focus.

After some months, he was moved to another detention camp. The second camp was much bigger and the violence was worse. There was more screaming. We were not allowed to go outside. This camp was stricter and there were no visiting rights. In the second camp, he was in a chain all the time with black material on his head. He was beaten all the time and wanted to commit suicide.

UTFW2-059 - Orynbek Koksebek

1. I was born in 1980 in China, in Mointal, Shaueshek, as the official romanized name, also transliterated from Mongolian as Qoqak, is a county-level city and the administrative seat of Tacheng Prefecture, in northern Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, Xinjiang. The city was sometimes called Tarbaghatay or Tarbagatai and in European languages as Chuguchak. I moved to Kazakhstan in 2004 where I got citizenship in 2005. I went to China November 22, 2017. I was accused of dual citizenship. I was put under house arrest for 2 months after which I went to jail for 6 months and I moved between two jails. And I returned back to Kazakhstan April 12, 2018.
2. On November 22, 2017, I went to China and tried to communicate with my other relatives brother, etc as they were still there. I stayed at my cousin's house during this time. When I gave my passport, they took it away and I asked why they took it. They asked me where my Chinese passport was. I said I do not have one as I am a citizen of Kazakhstan. They wanted to take a picture of me. They told me I was holding dual citizenship. This is a crime in China, they said. I didn't have the paper in my records that confirmed I'd renounced my citizenship. They said they didn't have any records at all.
3. I was registered at my cousin's house which is where I stayed. During this time, I was always followed and asked what I was doing. Religious ceremonies or visiting families was not allowed. I was initially kept under house arrest for two months.

3. I then went to my hometown and stayed with my relatives. The village was unrecognizable. My own family was afraid even to talk to me. It was nothing like the year before. Every day, local authorities would come by and explain to me that I couldn't leave China until I presented this paper renouncing my citizenship, which I'd been told I would receive soon. One day they asked me to sign a document. They said if I signed it, they would restore my registration, cancel it officially, and I could go back to Kazakhstan. So, I signed. This was a paper about changing my citizenship which they

took issue with. They wanted me to sign declaring that I was a traitor. I got asked many questions why I went to Kazakhstan and why I changed my citizenship, and why I came to East Turkestan.

4. After some weeks, on December 15, the ethnic Kazakh interrogator from the border came to see me. He was accompanied by three Han Chinese men. They said my paperwork had gone through. They were going to take me to the border. But first, they said, you need to be examined by a doctor.

5. They drove me to a large office building. It was shiny like a hospital, and everyone was wearing white medical clothing. But it was also somehow different from a hospital

— I couldn't tell you exactly how. We went from room to room for different examinations. There were several doctors, male and female, and they checked all over my body, from head to toe. I don't speak Chinese. I couldn't understand what people were saying. I wanted to resist, but I was afraid. They took my blood pressure, checked, body head and heart. They took urine, blood, and stool samples also. They also took an X-ray

6. Guards arrived and took me to jail. They said I was a traitor because I became a Kazakh citizen. We finally left the facility that wasn't a hospital, and they drove me to a multistorey building surrounded by walls and barbed wire. It looked like a prison. I knew we were in the middle of Chuguchak somewhere, but I didn't know more than that. I took my phone out of my pocket and tried to make a call — I don't even know who I was going to call — but they saw what I was doing and took my phone away. As we entered the building, they told me simply that I had to go through a check-in process here. Afterward, they said, you will be set free. They asked for my shirt. Then my pants. I was left in my underwear.

7. I was then taken to the a re-education camp. There were 7 people in the cell, who were all Muslim, some Chinese and other. I was the only person who spoke Kazakh.

8. The camp had a few windows but it was very dark and had iron all around the cells. There was no water, only a well.

9. In the first 24 hours there was an interrogation. I was asked lots of questions –why did I come here? Where am I going? What am I trying to go here? Who am I staying with? I answered all the questions. I said all my brothers are in Kazakhstan but I came here to visit my relatives. I was told I was a traitor. I asked them why they did not take me in 2016 when I came when my father passed away.

10. On the morning of the seventh day, two people came and took me away. We went to a new room, much like the first. We were alone. One of the interrogators was either Kazakh or Uyghur; the other was Chinese. The first asked whether I knew why I was there. First of all, he said, you've been using dual citizenship, and that's a crime. Second, you are a traitor. And third, you have a debt in China.

11. None of it was true. I told them I don't have dual citizenship. I'm a Kazakh citizen. What's more, I told them, I don't have any debts in China. I left a long time ago. I don't owe China anything and China doesn't owe me anything. I repeated what the man at the border had advised me to say, that I came only to check on my registration status. I don't know why I'm here, I told them. I didn't commit any crime. I asked them to prove to me that I committed a crime.

12. At one point They took me to a different room. It was December and cold. There was a hole in the ground. It was taller than a man. "If you don't understand," they said, "we'll make you understand." I lost my mind as the hole was very dark and I could not understand why I was put in jail. They brought a bucket of cold water and poured it on me. They had cuffed my hands and now told me to raise my hands over my head. But it was a narrow hole, and I couldn't move inside. I couldn't raise my hands. Somehow, I lost consciousness.

13. I was given 3 songs to memorise. But I did not speak Chinese and I tried to learn it anyway. It took me 1.5 months to learn the song even though I do not know what

it is about. We were not allowed to speak to other people. If you did you were put in a small plastic chair with no back. if you lent back you were beaten from the sides so you have to sit straight. If you broke the rules the punishment was the tiger chair.

14. After 1.5 months I was taken to a security hospital where they checked my body and was given an injection on my right side. They told me it was a flu injection but it could not have been as everyone was given one. It was on the right shoulder. After that my health changed, I was tired all the time and lose mentality and it was hard to focus.

15. The prison boss spoke my language, but his nationality was Uyghur – I asked them why I was here because I am a Kazakh citizen. They told me that I had to learn Chinese and I will be here 5 years and I have to learn songs. I was told if I didn't learn Chinese, I would not be allowed out. This was the only person I could communicate with in my language.

16. Early in the morning they took some of the inmates to school. At the start I did not know what the school was about. After 1.5 months I was taken to the school also. I was taught the history of China and meant to learn it all. I was punished if I did not listen the teacher. I was told – put in black hood

17. One day they took us all out and cut all our hair. Shaved our heads.

18. I was put in a room for 25 people. We kept it clean as there was the bathroom and beds in the same place. The security watched them and then they make mess and whilst they were doing this we would have to face the wall. We were then made to clean up the mess. For example, they put small matches everywhere.

19. Every Sunday our cell was searched. We all had to kneel and put our hands on top of our heads and look down as they tore the cell apart. We could see the guards' pistols right at eye level. I don't know what they were looking for. We would joke

with one another that we should probably produce whatever it was we'd stolen, so that the searches would stop.

20. We were given some meat, but we did not know what kind, whether it was pork, donkey or something else. I did not have a choice whether to eat it or not.

21. We could hear people being beaten, when people were screaming. We could hear it too loud in the dining room.

22. I was in the black room 5-6 times. It was terrible, the room was too dark with no light. The floor was cement with nowhere to sleep.

23. I was there perhaps 125 days or more. I was not given salt. When you are not given salt, your bones become weak.

24 I do not know how many months I was there, maybe 2-3 months where I was moved to another jail. When I tried to ask them how many occupied the prison. I was told around 5000. I was trying to ask how many people came from the first prison to the second one, as I didn't see as I had a hood. I was told that probably 500 came along from the first prison to the second one. The second was a re-education camp.

25 The first jail was very hot and the cells were too small. At the first jail, sometimes my cousin was allowed to visit me. I would tell him I do not need Chinese language as I am a Kazakh. He just told me to continue learning Chinese. The second jail was much bigger and the violence was worse. There were more screaming. They shaved the women's heads so men and women looked the same. We were not allowed to go outside. This jail was more strict and there was no visiting rights. I was not able to talk to anyone else.

27. In the second jail I was in a chain all the time with black material on my head. I was beaten all the time. The people who did not listen to guards

always had chains

on them and were taken to the 'dark room'. The bathroom was in the same room where we slept. The floor was very cold and we had to sleep on the cement floor. We also had to eat in this room.

28. I wanted to commit suicide. The other prisoner explained to me that I should not try to do so as it is not a good way out of the prison. Once, I even tried to strangle myself with a shirt in my room, but because there was a camera in the cell the guards came in and stopped me.

29. One day before I was released, I was interrogated from 6pm until morning.

30. I am the only person trying to speak publicly about this – the other people in Kazakhstan ask me why and I say that the Chinese government should take responsibility for what they did to me. I was not even a Chinese citizen and I want to know why they did this to me.

31. I struggle to get to sleep but then sleep a lot now. I struggle to remember what happened yesterday. My memory has got worse. No medicine helps me. My heart rate is too high also. I sometimes tremble. I also divorced with my wife when I returned from Kazakhstan.

I have read and understood this witness statement and I confirm that I agree with its contents.

I understand that this statement will be published on the Uyghur Tribunal website and will be available to the general public online.

Signature: OrynbeK Koksebek

Date: 12/08/2021