



AN INTERNATIONAL PEOPLE'S TRIBUNAL

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Witness Statement of Dolkun Isa
Uyghur Tribunal

Name : Dolkun Isa

Sex : Male

Age : 54 years

My name is Dolkun Isa, I was born in Aksu on 2 September 1967. I attended primary and middle school in Aksu and entered Xinjiang University in Urumqi, studying physics in 1984. My father was involved as an engineer in Agronomy and my mother was a Company employee in a shopping mall.

1. In 1987 while I was studying at Xinjiang University in Urumqi, I organised and initiated a student association, called “Students Cultural Science Union” (the Union) at the University. The reason for setting up this union was my concern about the widespread discrimination against Uyghurs, which in my opinion, mostly resulted from illiteracy and lack of education. Together with my colleagues, we mobilised students to educate people in rural areas. I also noticed that under the Chinese constitution and the laws granting autonomy to Xinjiang Province we enjoyed, on paper, lots of rights, but none of these rights actually applied because ordinary citizens did not have enough education to understand their own rights.
2. The purpose of the Union was to arrange classrooms in rural areas to teach Uyghurs the alphabet and reading and writing of Uyghur texts. Hundreds of students volunteered and were sent to all parts of East Turkestan to carry out enlightenment activities.
3. On 15 June 1988, we organised a large gathering of the students (over 8,000) in Xinjiang University and started a demonstration to protest the lack of equal rights for Uyghurs and other minorities. Same day and before the demonstration I and other my friends were invited to the headquarters of the Deputy of the Secretary General of the Communist Party in the Autonomous Region in Urumqi to debate

the issue. The debate lasted for 5 hours, with the Head of the Education Department, the Head of the Finance Department and the Head of the Planning Committee of the Xinjiang Autonomous Region. During the five hours, neither side managed to convince the other and at 1pm the meeting ended with no result.

4. We then decided to take to the streets and by 2 pm a large crowd had gathered in the streets of Urumqi and the demonstration lasted for 5-6 hours until late in the evening. We decided to continue with the demonstration the next day.
5. In the evening, the President of Xinjiang University came to my room where 8 other students also shared the room with me. He asked us to join a meeting with High Level Officials of the Autonomous Region and Members of the University Administration. Our discussions lasted until midnight. I was put under serious pressure to stop the demonstration the next day.
6. Next day I was under house arrest and ordered that I should not leave my dormitory. As a result, I could not join the demonstration the next day. The same was ordered for some other friends of mine, as a result the demonstration did not take place. The University was closed, and all classes were stopped.
7. As a result of these events and whilst the University was closed, we were all asked to self-criticise, we had to write, in detail, about our own mistakes on a regular basis. Every day we were asked to write the same stories again and again and if there were any discrepancy with the previous self-critique, we were questioned in detail to explain the difference and the reason for such discrepancy.
8. The disturbances lasted for 3½ months. It culminated on 27 September with a big meeting of all university students and the faculty members. A decision was made that myself and Waris Ababekri (as I learned later, he was imprisoned in the concentration camp in 2018, in November 2019 was released and died 2 weeks after his release), as leaders of the Union were kicked out of university. Other 13 students who were also considered organizers were given different disciplinary

punishments. This was 8 months before I was due to graduate, so I was not allowed to finish my studies.

9. I and Waris went to Beijing to the National Petition Bureau to complain about our exclusion from the university which we found to be unfair and illegal. In those days we were still able to talk to the authorities. As a result of our complaint, we managed to meet high officials at the National Petition Bureau and the Ministry of Education. They did not do anything with our complaint, but at least we were listened to.
10. I returned to Aksu and joined my parents. In Aksu I tried to set up a language school to teach foreign languages, such as English, Russian, Arabic and Turkish. I talked to businessmen for funding and to teachers and educators who organised the school. In a matter of a few months, I managed to put a plan together and asked for a licence to open the school from the Aksu authorities. However, my application was rejected, and I was not given permission to set up the school in Aksu.
11. Having failed in that venture I went to Beijing and started studying English and Turkish at Beijing University between 1990 and 1992. I also got married in Beijing. Then I opened a restaurant in Beijing, it was between 1992 and 1994, serving Uyghur cuisine.
12. The restaurant was located on the street where other Uyghur restaurants were. My restaurant was doing very well and had a lot of foreigners as customers. I found it doubly good because I could practice my English. I had no idea that I was being monitored by the Chinese secret service. When I later learned that the secret service already had a case, allegedly my restaurant was a spy network for the exchange of information.
I knew that would have exposed me to very serious criminal accusations.

13. In February 1994 I was asked to go to the police station for the interview. During the long interview they asked me many questions about my restaurant and why I served so many foreigners. My only explanation was that the Uyghur food was good and unusual, so my guests were very interested in it. The other Uyghur Restaurants also have many foreigners as guests as well. The policeman who interviewed me came to my restaurant very often and ate for free. I said to him during the interview, "I wonder why you come to eat at my place, maybe that's why other guests come to eat!". After that interview I was released, but I knew that was just the beginning.
14. Realising the problems that I was facing, I decided to leave China. I managed to get a fake passport. My wife was pregnant with our first child. I decided to stay, but my wife insisted that I should leave as soon as possible.
15. I left China in May 1994 and went to Turkey leaving my pregnant wife behind. My daughter was born in 1994 while I was in Turkey. I went to University and studied politics and the Turkish language until 1996. In February 1996, my wife joined me in Turkey.
16. When I came to Turkey, I established the East Turkistan students-youth association. However, I realised that China's relationship with Turkey was warming up and China was getting more influence in Turkey.
17. I had a fake passport and could not get a proper residency in Turkey. My activism was attracting attention and therefore at the suggestion of my friends to move to Germany and I applied for asylum in Germany in June 1996. I was granted asylum in November 1996. My son was born in Germany in 1998, and eventually my daughter joined me in Germany and after 3½ years I saw my daughter for the first time in 1998.
18. In November 1996 in Germany we established the World Uyghur Youth Congress, and I was elected as Chairman of the Executive Committee. In October 1999 was

established the East Turkestan (Uyghurstan) National Congress. In April 2004 in Munich these two umbrella organisations merged into World Uyghur Congress (WUC) and I was elected as Secretary General of the new Organization.

Use of Terrorism Label by PRC

19. Before the events of 11 September 2001, the Chinese Government did not refer to Uyghurs or any of the Uyghur organisations as being terrorist(s). However, following the US war on terror, in December 2003 China declared four Uyghur organisations as terrorists' organisations, these included East Turkestan Islamic Movement: East Turkestan Liberation Organisation, World Uyghur Youth Congress and East Turkestan Information Centre. China also declared 11 people in charge of these organisations as terrorists. I was number 3 on the list.

20. In 2002, the United States was seeking PRC's support for their war on terrorism and in particular for their forthcoming invasion of Iraq. To provide such support, the Chinese authorities requested the United States to recognise all or some of the Uyghur organisations as terrorists. Eventually in 2002, the US Government listed East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) as a terrorist organisation. I have never heard the name of ETIM before Chinese declaration. In any case, last year in November the former Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, removed the East Turkestan Islamic Movement from the list of terrorist organisations.

21. The World Uyghur Congress has never incited or condoned violence. Our mission statement is very clear, we only employ peaceful means and would achieve our objects through dialogue. We fully respect the rules of international law. Further, I have personally never been involved in any violent act or incited or condoned violence.

PRC's Constant Harassment

22. In 2019, the World Democracy Award was granted to WUC, the award ceremony at the US Congress where Nancy Pelosi, the speaker of the House and Liz Cheney,

one of the Republican leaders and some other bipartisan Congressman, senators were present. PRC's Ambassador protested this.

Further, on 30 March 2016, in a ceremony in the US Congress, I was given the award for Democracy by the Victims of the Communism Memorial. The Chinese government representatives tried to interfere with this matter and stop the award ceremony, but they did not succeed.

23. **(For paragraphs 23,24,25 I will add you an attachment where the events are described in detail).** I have a long history of being challenged by the PRC in almost every step that I have taken to bring Uyghur issues to the international fora. In 2013 I was attending the Session of Human Rights Council in Geneva. The security guards approached me and my colleagues and asked us to leave. When I asked why, I was told it was because of security reasons. Later in 2016 I learned that this occurred at PRC's initiative. PRC had asked for the names and details of the delegation from WUC. Over the objections of Emma Reilly, a high official in the UNHRC, the High Commissioner decided to release our names and details to PRC. This led to internal disputes and the recent resignation and revelation of the event by UN officials at the Human Rights Council.
24. In 2017, together with my colleagues at WUC we were invited to attend the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous People Conference in New York. During the coffee break we were approached by security personnel who asked us to leave. I reported this matter immediately to our colleagues. Amnesty International Human Rights Watch and other NGOs objected to the exclusion that we later learned was initiated by PRC. Andrea Gilmore, the then Undersecretary General of the UN reported this matter in a lengthy report to the General Assembly.
25. I made another application to attend this conference in 2018. I received approval and accreditation from the UNPFII secretariat. However, 3 days before my trip to New York, I received an email from the registration office that my application was pending (i.e., not yet approved). I then informed Mr. Andrea Gilmore's office and

Mrs. Sophie Richardson from Human Rights Watch. she asked me to come to New York. When I arrived at the registration office refused to issue me the accreditation badge. I emailed the German Embassy to the UN, and Sophie contacted the US Ambassador Ms. Kelley Currie and they intervened on my behalf but still the registration office refused to issue accreditation badges to me due to the interventions from PRC. As I could not attend the first week the event I returned to Germany at the weekend. When I arrived in Germany, I was informed that my application had now been approved. I made the second trip back to New York. This time a staff of the German Embassy at the UN came with me to the registration office and finally I got accredited. I was allowed to make a statement at the UN, but the Chinese delegation intervened and interrupted the session by claiming that WUC is a terrorist group, and I am a terrorist as well. The US Ambassador to the UN responded that if we have given him a visa, he cannot be a terrorist because he has been checked. The German Ambassador also intervened saying that if I were a terrorist, I would not have been given citizenship. There were debates among UN members, the supporters of China, including Russia, Pakistan and Cuba intervened in favour of China, the UK, Israel, and many other representatives supported my case and eventually I was able to deliver my statement.

26. Following the uprising in Urumqi in July 5 in 2009, In September 2009 Ms. Heidi Hautala, the chair of the sub-committee on Human Rights of the European Parliament (she is now Vice President of the European Parliament) organised a joint press conference with former President of WUC Ms. Rebiya Kadeer. The PRC Ambassador in EU approached Ms. Hautala to stop the press conference, but she refused to do so, and the conference went ahead. I pointed out that the demonstration was a peaceful gathering by ordinary, unarmed civilians, but the Chinese police suppressed it brutally by using violence. On 5 July 2009, in response to the peaceful demonstration, PRC cut the electricity and all communications. Later the Chinese Official News Agency reported that 197 were killed in the process while according to our sources more than 1,000 were killed.

27. In 1997 the Chinese Government issued an international warrant of arrest against me, initially accusing me of criminal conduct and murder. After September 11, they added “terrorist” on the warrant. Consequently, Interpol placed my name on the “Red Notice”. For 21 years I had to live with such threat over my head. I was detained many times by the police in Switzerland, South Korea, Italy and the US. I never lost hope. Only on 21st February 2018 my name was removed from the Red Notice list.

My Family

28. Since 1994 I have not seen my parents. I sent them invitations several times to visit me in Germany, but Chinese authorities did not give travel documents for my parents. During this time, I could not get video communication with them, although I could call them until 2017 with ordinary phone calls. As all my calls were monitored, our discussions were very brief. My parents were not allowed to have internet access and therefore other means of communication (including WeChat) could not be used.
29. My last call to my mother was in mid-April 2017 when she was not prepared to talk to me. My wife tried to call her a few days later when she told my wife that we should not call them anymore.
30. I was informed that the Chinese authorities constantly harassed them by telling them that “your son is a terrorist” and put my parents under constant monitoring and surveillance.
31. In 2018, I received a call from a friend in Australia telling me that my mother had passed away. As I could not access family members, I could not verify this news, but calls made by Radio Free Asia (they make random calls to authorities in Xinjiang) found out that my mother was in a camp from mid-2017 and she passed away on 17 of May 2018 while still incarcerated. But I got this news 3 weeks later.

32. As I heard, my father passed away in 2020. My elder sister was forced to appear on Chinese television blaming me for the death of my parents, reading from a text in Chinese, she blamed and denounced me as a terrorist. Also, my sister-in-law (my elder brothers' wife) spoke on the same programme against me. I did not hear anything from my elder brother himself. He was a mathematics Professor at Aksu Education Institute and as I heard he was jailed for 17 years. Also my younger brother has disappeared and I do not know his whereabouts. I applied for the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances to investigate my brother's case. Two requests have been sent by the UN to communicate with China, but so far, no answer has been received.

Here is the link to the video that the Chinese authorities have forced my family to denounce me.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cJW3za4taSM>

I confirm that this statement is true, and I am prepared to appear before the Tribunal and give evidence.



Dolkun ISA

March 20, 2021

760 **4 June 2021 (06:15:40 – 07:25:30)**

761 **Dolkun Isa– UTFW-021**

762

763 *Counsel – Would you briefly explain your student activities?*

764 DI – Thank you for inviting me as a witness to the tribunal. I have studied in Xinjiang
765 university from 1984-1988. I studied at university I have witnessed various forms of
766 discrimination and government oppression and that caused a lot of questions in my mind.
767 There was a political study class on each Wednesday we used to study Chinese policy
768 and constitution. I realised nearly 70-85% in East Turkestan was Uyghur and Kazakh
769 were left illiterate on purpose. And by doing so, they knew people without a proper
770 education and awareness would not have the power to demand their rights or exercise
771 them. We established a student union focused on science and culture – it was a legal
772 organisation. The purpose of this organisation was to dispatch the university’s students
773 to corners of East Turkestan to educate them which was free. We found a poster on the
774 school wall which said when come to Xinjiang make male as slaves and women as
775 prostitutes. We reported this poster to the university and demanded the university’s
776 administration come to punish those responsible. Our demands were left unanswered.

777 *Counsel – Were you ever arrested as a result of this label as ‘terrorist’?*

778 DI – After I came to Germany in 1996, the Chinese government issued. I was detained in
779 Korea airport, detained in Turkey and U.S. and detained in Italy in 2017.

780 *Counsel – You were accused of being involved in the East Turkestan Islamic Movement,*
781 *which was labelled a terrorist organisation, were you ever involved with them?*

782 DI – I have not heard of that organisation and I do not know the name of that organisation.

783 *Counsel – Would you like to make a personal statement about the difficulties your family*
784 *has faced as a result of your activities?*

785 DI – I invited my family to come and join me in Germany but the Chinese government
786 refuse to issue passports to them or my relatives. In January 2020 through the Chinese
787 media Global Times, I found out that my father also passed away. On May 28 I became
788 aware that my brother was sentenced to life imprisonment. My brother called Hushtar Isa
789 sentenced to 25 years imprisonment and another report tells of 17 years, there is no way
790 to verify which statement is correct. I have no idea how many of my family are in
791 concentration camps or are alive.

792 *Panel – You stated the main aim of student organisation was to bring enlightenment to*
793 *rural areas, did it include to raise political awareness, or inspire political action and try*
794 *expand separatist ideology?*

795 DI – The basic purpose of the student union was to help illiterate people to gain the skill
796 of literacy. It was also at that time highly criminal according to the central government.
797 There was no political or separatism, as at that time it was 70-80% needed education
798 which the government did not provide.

799 *Panel – At the time you were organising the protest at university, did this interfere with*
800 *your academic attainment? Did failure to achieve academically contribute to your*
801 *expulsion?*

802 DI – It was a summer holiday. After I was expelled, I could not continue my education. It
803 was not about my study or academic practice that contributed this, it was my activism that
804 became the primary reason for the expulsion. I could not continue my academic dream.

805 *Panel – Were the protests going on at this university supported by other student*
 806 *organisations or protests around Xinjiang? Why did you set up a restaurant in 1992 in*
 807 *Beijing?*

808 DI – Initially the government gave the impression that it was ok to open a language class
 809 to teach English, Russian and other foreign languages in my home town of Aksu. When I
 810 saw no hope to do this I came to Beijing. I studied English and Turkish and but there was
 811 no possibility for me to gain employment. To sustain my life, I decided to open a
 812 restaurant.

813 *Panel – What were the aims of the East Turkestan Students-Youth organisation you*
 814 *founded in Turkey?*

815 DI – There were 60-70 Uyghur students, most of whom were at the same time were part
 816 of the student's movement. They were my school mates from the university. The aim to
 817 form this organisation firstly to bring all of us together, and at the same time use our
 818 resources to create a public awareness in turkey about what was going on to Uyghurs
 819 which involved seminars, and lectures. That was the basic purpose of the organisation.

820 *Panel – At a later date you were elected president of the World Uyghur Congress, what*
 821 *were you known for to get elected?*

822 DI – Before establishing the WUC in 1995 when I was in Turkey I went to Almaty,
 823 Kazakhstan and had the first world Uyghur cultural day. Because there was a sizeable
 824 group of Uyghurs in Europe, a few in the US. Then were a few Uyghurs in the west, there
 825 was a small aim for Uyghur youth to have a platform. Uyghurs from 8 countries
 826 participated in this event, after the first day however after China interfered in the event so
 827 we did not have too much discussion. In 1996 I came to Munich and then I realised there
 828 was no awareness about the Uyghur situation in Germany either. In 1996 using our limited
 829 resources we represented the lack of Uyghur youth to come together in Germany to have
 830 a discussion and after this we decided to form the Uyghur Youth Congress.

831 *Panel – How can you be sure the denouncement by yourself by your sister and sister-in-*
 832 *law were all due to duress by the Chinese authorities? Were either of your brothers*
 833 *politically active?*

834 DI – Neither of my brothers were politically active. It was impossible as after I left China
835 the Chinese government kept the whole of my family under surveillance so they were
836 afraid to go anywhere. They were afraid if my family were visited, they would get in
837 trouble. There was 24/7 surveillance so it was not possible for them to do anything
838 political. It was not allowed.

839 *Panel – Apart from China, which other countries have supported the claim that you are a*
840 *terrorist?*

841 DI – There were countries under Chinese pressure that stopped me from entering but
842 never issued any or accused me with that label. Only China labelled me such. Some
843 countries were stricter due to Chinese pressure. Even yesterday the Chinese government
844 accused me of terrorism about putting forward any evidence. It is not new for me. After I
845 got the label of terrorist in 2003, the German authorities asked them to back up the
846 evidence that I was a terrorist, to which they failed to reproduce any evidence.

847 *Panel – Can the tribunal assume that when you were detained under the Interpol red*
848 *notice in Switzerland, south Korea, Italy and the US, that you were released promptly on*
849 *the grounds that there were no grounds to detain you further?*

850 DI – Yes, this was not based on fact, just the Chinese allegations.