



AN INTERNATIONAL PEOPLE'S TRIBUNAL

Witness Name: Orynbek Koksebek		
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**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

1 **12 September 2021 (5:31:30 – 6:14:30)**

2 **Orynbek Koksebek**

3

4 *COUNSEL – Can you confirm that both detention centres in which you were detained*
5 *were re-education camps?*

6 ORYNBEK KOKSEBEK – Both are Chinese camps, I could call them prisons and I
7 spent, in total, 125 days or four months. After that I was under house arrest for two
8 months.

9 *COUNSEL – In the second detention centre, you stated you were chained all the time,*
10 *as well as beaten all the time. Are you able to tell us more by way of detail?*

11 OK – When I crossed the border the first time, I was taken by a guy named *James*
12 to the very first camp. And the reason I was taken there was I was a Kazakh national
13 and I could not speak any Chinese. While I was taken to the second camp I was
14 shackled and handcuffed and hooded. But I would say that I was tortured mostly in the
15 first prison when I was taken into a hole or well-like thing.

16 *COUNSEL – You've stated that you still receive pressure from the Chinese*
17 *government. Is this something you are willing or able to talk about?*

18 OK – I would say there are many people who work for the Chinese government in
19 Kazakhstan. I was one of the first, I was one of the detainees who was released very
20 early. So, when I came to Kazakhstan, the guys like *Yerbakhult* was still in China.
21 So even at that time I started receiving some threats from those guys but I did not care
22 and I started giving interviews to various media.

23 *PANEL – After you had been to the police station and you were staying with your*
24 *cousins, the family were frightened to talk to you. Why was that?*

25 OK – When I crossed the border, my cousin met me at the border and there were other
26 policemen who told me to, that we needed to go to Karakax. And after going there I
27 had to sign these documents. But before that in 2015 I had obtained Kazakh
28 citizenship.

29 *PANEL – Before his detention, he says that his relatives were frightened to talk to*
30 *him?*

31 OK – I stayed in my aunt's son's house first and all the family members there were
32 afraid of talking to me, especially talking about the people being sent to those
33 education centres. And they were afraid to meet, like, to register me after I arrived in
34 China. I did not understand why they were doing this. Then I went to my hometown
35 which was a village and I witnessed so many things have changed there. Although I
36 did not have the local phone number, I started receiving phone calls. It happened
37 before even my relatives bought me a local number. So, after receiving, after getting
38 the new number I again just received so many threatening phone calls.

39 *PANEL – And were your family also receiving threatening phone calls?*

40 OK – Yes, they also received phone calls but they did not give me the details. But what
41 they told me was that there was a guy named James who told them that he would take
42 me back to, see me off, to the Kazakh/China border.

43 *PANEL – So instead of taking you to the border, they made you have some more tests.*
44 *Can you describe, you say it's a hospital like place, was it like a laboratory? Can you*
45 *describe it a bit better?*

46 OK – It was December 17th 2017, the guy named James first told me he would bring
47 me to the border and he was with another three Han Chinese guys and I said goodbye
48 to my relatives. But instead of taking me to the border, they brought me to another
49 place. When we reached there, they told me that I needed to have a medical check-
50 up first. That facility was really good, it looked really nice and that they had my blood
51 samples, they drew blood from my fingers and from my veins. And I had other, some
52 other tests too. And James got all the papers given by the hospital about my check-
53 up. Then I asked him what was going on but he did not answer. Instead, he talked to
54 those Chinese guys, Han Chinese guys in Chinese, which I did not understand. Then,
55 in the end, they took me to a place which was surrounded by barbed wires.

56 *PANEL – You were then, from the place with the barbed wires, taken on to a re-*
57 *education camp where you said there were seven people in a cell. You said there was*
58 *no water. Was there no water to drink?*

59 OK – After I was being taken to that compound, which was surrounded by barbed wire,
60 after entering in to that building I wanted to make a phone call first but the guy,
61 *James*, took my phone away and instead he asked, ordered me, to take off my
62 clothes and I was left only with my underwear. And there was another older guy who
63 provided me with some casual clothes to wear and then I was handcuffed and taken
64 to that room where the seven people were staying. I am not quite sure if one of them
65 was Han or Hui but what I remember is he spoke Chinese, Han Chinese, Mandarin
66 Chinese. The other guys were Uyghurs. But all of them were afraid of talking to me or
67 just even having meals with me. During the daytime, they were absent from the cell
68 for hours, sometimes for up to three hours and they were taken back.

69 *PANEL – When they came back, do you know where they had been? Were they being*
70 *interrogated?*

71 OK – I wanted to know the reason and I asked but I had to ask in Kazakh and nobody
72 replied to me in Kazakh because they spoke Chinese and Uyghur. I did not understand
73 any of those languages. There was Han Chinese, the guard, whose surname was
74 Yang and there was another Han guy who was a bald guy and the day, two of them
75 came to my cell and took me to interrogate me. They would call it *tanhua*. In Chinese
76 [it means] to have conversations, something like that. Then four people took me to
77 another place to question me and they asked if I knew why I came to that place and
78 they also explained to me that I was a traitor, I was using dual citizenship and I was in
79 debt. Then they also told me that I had signed a paper to renounce my Kazakh
80 citizenship. I told them I did not understand anything and that they said, okay we will
81 explain [to] you and they took me to the hole.

82 *PANEL – Can you tell us about what happened when they tried to put you down the*
83 *well?*

84 OK – It was a well and there was a metal stair and the four guys ordered me to take
85 the stairs to get in to the well. After that, they ordered me to raise my hands and look
86 upwards and when I did, they poured water from the above and then what I remember
87 is I fainted because when I came to myself, I was sitting in the cell with the seven other
88 guys. And when I came to myself, one of the guys told me that I should confess my
89 crime.

90 *PANEL – Were the seven other people in the well with him or were you alone in the*
91 *well?*

92 OK – I was alone in the well. The seven people are the people who were with me in
93 that cell room, not in the well because the well was so tiny that only one person can
94 be there.

95 *PANEL – You write that you were in the well for seven days. Did they feed you?*

96 OK – They did not feed me because I fainted and to be honest, I don't even remember
97 if I were there for hours or for days. I am suffering from memory loss, so I don't
98 remember.

99 *PANEL – You then later on were asked to memorise three songs in Chinese and it*
100 *took you one and half months to sing them. What I want to know is if you couldn't do*
101 *it was that when they made you sit on a small plastic chair where if you leant*
102 *backwards, you were beaten and then possibly put in the tiger chair. Did this ever*
103 *happen to you?*

104 OK – After the well incident they told me that I needed to learn three Chinese songs
105 which included the 'east is red without the communist party there would be no new
106 China' and the Chinese national anthem. It was very hard for me to recite those songs
107 but meanwhile all the other guys there helped me including *Yerbakhult*, *Yerkhan* ,
108 and *Sumcar* those guys helped me a lot and there were other women like *Eainer
109 Nursolu* and *Nursolu* is now in Kazakhstan.

110 *PANEL – Did they ever put you in the tiger chair?*

111 OK – They told me that if I failed to learn those songs, then I would be given a prison
112 term, up to five years prison term. But only the detainees were aware of this, so I am
113 not sure if I was given this prison term in reality. All the other times that I was forced
114 to sit on a plastic stool without any movement. If I moved my hand or legs, then I would
115 be punished.

116 *PANEL – You could hear people being beaten and screaming. Did you ever see them*
117 *doing this to your fellow inmates?*

118 OK - Yes, I witnessed such things. The guy I mentioned, surnamed Yang, threatened
119 me that I would be sitted on the tiger chair but I wasn't sitted on that. But he also
120 threatened me saying that I would be deprived of food for seven days and because he
121 was angry that I kept saying that I was a Kazakh citizen. I was allowed to meet my
122 relatives and when I was taken to that room to meet my relatives I would be shackled
123 and during that time I saw two women, one Kazakh and another Uyghur woman, and
124 the Kazakh women went there to see her baby.

125 *PANEL – You were given an injection in your right side. Were the other inmates also*
126 *given injections?*

127 OK – It wasn't only me who was injected and it happened in the very first prison. Not
128 long after I was taken to that prison, I was injected and all the other people there were
129 injected too including *Yerbakhult* and *Sumcar*. And I remember the guy named
130 *Sumcar* broke his hand because he asked for salt. We were not given salt while we
131 were there. I would cry a lot there because I was so worried that I wouldn't be released
132 because I could not learn any Chinese and it was very hard for me to recite songs.

133 *PANEL – You wanted to commit suicide. Was this because you were so depressed*
134 *and low or where you just wanting to get out?*

135 OK – Yes, I tried to commit suicide but fortunately the guys like *Yerbakhult* rescued
136 me. All this happened because I did not speak any Chinese. Every time they
137 questioned me, they kept saying that I wouldn't be released at least for five years and
138 they would always ask why I become Kazakh citizen. So, in total, I was quested about
139 27 times and each time they repeated this. They also asked me to sign some

140 documents which I did not understand at all and I have signed it and only after that, I
141 realised that actually, it was about renouncing my Kazakh citizenship and restoring my
142 Chinese citizenship. So, I regretted, if I understood that I wouldn't have just signed it
143 but I'm very thankful to the guys like *Yerbakhult* and some other Uyghur and the
144 Kyrgyz guys in there because they witnessed what I experienced and I hope they will
145 give evidence if they are still alive.

146 *PANEL – You are now back in Kazakhstan. Can you briefly explain how you are? Do*
147 *you still suffer from what you have been through?*

148 OK – I am still in depression and every time I recall my experiences I just cry. Those
149 guys like *Yascar* and James scolded me a lot, they tortured me mentally and
150 especially *Yascar*. Also, although his name sounds like Kazakh but he wasn't
151 Kazakh, I think he was Uyghur or some other ethnicity. I am not sure about that but he
152 scolded me a lot. He asked me to prove that I hadn't renounced my Kazakh citizenship.
153 Today I came here to give evidence and just to find an answer finally why I was
154 detained in the first place.

155 *PANEL – You may have a view and opinion on why the PRC, the People's Republic*
156 *of China, has been doing the things it's done to you and to others. If you have a view*
157 *or opinion and would like to tell us what it is, please do.*

158 OK – Yes, the atrocities the Chinese government have perpetrated, not only to me but
159 to the whole Muslim population including the Uyghurs, Hui, Kyrgyz and others. What
160 they want to do is they want all these people to speak one language which is Mandarin
161 Chinese. They also want to conquer the entire world. It's not just the thing I'm made
162 of. The guy named *Yascar* told me that one day that China will conquer the world. I
163 told him that no, you will never be able to conquer the people like us. I wonder if we

164 can get, if the people like us would get any freedom? If there is any freedom for us
165 and was it fair? What is the definition of fair, fairness?

166 *PANEL – Who was the man who told you China wants to rule the world?*

167 OK – The guys like *James* and others, I remember his name and I think he was the
168 deputy head of that prison and he also told me the name of the head of the prison. But
169 because of my memory loss I cannot remember their names. And there was another
170 guy named *Yascar* he was the deputy head their too. He kept saying to me that I
171 shouldn't say that I am a Kazakh citizen anymore.

172 If it's allowed, I would ask the panel members that what do you think the Chinese
173 government is doing is right because I was a Kazakh national and they just detained
174 me for no reason. Is there any legal judgment about that and will they continue to
175 trample on our human rights as if we were dogs and cats. The last thing I would like
176 to mention is now I am going back to Kazakhstan. I don't know about my future, if I will
177 be detained or if someone will kill me but still, I would like to express my gratitude to
178 the Kazakh government, the Ministry of Kazakhstan, that they rescued me and all the
179 Uyghur people who have organised this. Thank you.