

Uyghur Tribunal – Fact Witness statement

UTFW2-045 - Yusuf Hilel

1. My name is Yusuf Helil. I'm from 1st group, Langer hamlet, Awat village, Korla city of East Turkestan. I would like to give a brief testimony about the atrocities perpetrated by the Chinese invaders on my family and the time when they set up the concentration camps.
2. We are five children - three sisters and two brothers. I am the youngest. My eldest sister, Altunhan Helil was married and moved to Borqay village, Karasheher county, Korla city. Since I came to Turkey on March 21, 2016, I had no contact with her. By the end of October 2020, I received the news that my sister had passed away, and I could not be sure about how she had passed away, in the camp or due to other reasons.
3. My second sister, Patem Helil, was married and moved to the 3rd group, Kara Yulgun hamlet, Kara Yulgun village, Korla city. She is a farmer. She came to Turkey with her husband in mid-May 2016 and returned after a 14-day trip. Her husband's name is Zaidun Ziyawudun. He is from the 3rd group, Kara Yulgun hamlet, Kara Yulgun village, Korla city. They are both about 65 years old. They had done nothing against Chinese invaders. But on their return, in 2017, they were both taken to a camp. After having spent two and a half years in the camp, in 2019, the couple were given 25 years of prison sentences. Their son, Osmanjan Zaidun, was released after having spent two and a half years in the camp, and there is no news about him. Upon leaving the camp, I learned that he had been fined 200,000 Yuan and forced to pay the fine by other relatives, getting loan from a bank.
4. Here is the convenient card - green card that is one level above the identity card of Chinese invaders. Chinese handed it out to a person who had done no activities against the government. I had it. My sister, her husband, their daughter and son-in-law all had it. The Chinese invaders, who gave this card as proof of innocence, still sentenced my innocent sister, an over 60-year-old farmer, and her husband to 25 years in prison, fined them 200,000 Yuan and destroyed their family.

5. My sister's daughter, Ayshemgöl Zaidun, is now around 40 years old. She was also put in a camp for two and a half years and then sentenced to 15 years in prison. Her husband, Ilham Osman, was also sentenced to 15 years in prison. I heard that they took their elder children to other Chinese provinces. Where are they now? How are they doing? I have not received any news.
6. Now about the time when the Chinese set up the camps: My brother, Muhammad Helil and her wife Tajihan, were arrested on March 19, 2015 on the pretext that they had watched foreign video tape. I looked for some police officers to inquire as to why they had been arrested. The police said he was at a training school in Korla and asked me to go there. I went to that school. I saw that a lot of men and women were being trained there for 15 days. The police also said that the ones who were considered to have changed their minds would return home after 15 days. We chatted in their dormitory. At the time, I asked the police when the school was set up. He said: "It was established in October 2014. Since then, we have been conducting short-term training - we are training those who have problems with their minds so that they do not do anything bad." They gathered men and women. As the police said himself, the purpose of the camp was to change the minds.
7. An imam of Qazanchi didn't eat the food saying he had stomach problem. They didn't let him go after 15 days. He again didn't eat their food, so after 15 days, he was considered not have changed his mind. They contacted *Guobao* (state security unit). When the officers came to take him, he begged them not to put him in prison, and agreed to eat their food even with stomachache. Like this, he was detained for 45 days. "We will never release those who have not changed their minds ..." the policeman told me.
8. I know the list of the people arrested since April 2015. The list was given to me by a prison official. 40 thousand people were arrested from April to July 2015. Of those, 20 thousand were given prison sentences. The prison official received the order that twenty thousand more were to be given prison sentences, so they have to be mentally prepared. I was told by the prison chief that in the prison where he worked, he was

forced to accommodate 15-20 people in a cell where 10 people could stay. I asked what were the crimes of those 40,000 people who were arrested in three months. The prison chief said: “nothing to be mentioned. They did nothing to be ruled by Chinese law. Let me give you just one example, someone from Kucha (He told me his name, but I forgot), who traded carpets in Urumqi, visited Kucha in June. The businessman gave away his land to his uncle. When he was driving to his home village, he did not stop to greet the village cadre who was riding his motorcycle. As he was driving fast, his car caused the village cadre covered in dust. So the village cadre called the police and the political department. The businessman was arrested and sentenced to eight-and-a-half years in prison. In the eyes of Chinese, his crime was allegedly ignoring a village cadre and looking down upon party members.

9. One more thing I witnessed: in our own village, I went to hamlet chief (Sunzhang in Chinese) to have a paper signed. A lot of villagers gathered there, and a boy came. I knew him. They were giving out toothpastes that costed three yuan each. They refused to give one to the boy. When he asked why, they said he didn't come the previous day and he didn't obey their call. He said he had something to do. Then they said whether his business was more important than that of the party and the government. Thus, they disputed a while. Hamlet chief then said he would call and send him to jail for five years. They refused to give him the toothpaste saying he wasn't eligible to get it. I myself witnessed this.
10. This means that in 2015-2014, the Chinese invaders gave full authority to rural cadres, party members and youth union leaders, rather than mayors. If they decided to have someone arrested, even the mayors couldn't prevent it. As they could do whatever they wanted. I had a village cadre acquaintance who grew up playing with me. He was a group chief (*dui zhang*) at the village. The village government had an orchard and leased it to someone who did not want to return it, so they went to court. As he had money and connections, he tried to make the orchard his own. The village cadre did not win the court case with no money nor backing. Meanwhile, the brother of the man who had rented the orchard got approval from religious affairs bureau of the prefecture to go on pilgrimage to Mecca. The list was shown to my friend. My friend

refused to authorize this person to go. He got telephone call from the religious affairs bureau saying that he didn't have the power not to approve what had been approved by the bureau. My friend said only he knew if this person was suitable to go or not. He even threatened them to face consequences by involving in his job and hung up the phone. A village cadre, who heads hundreds of families, exercised his authority more than the head of Religious Affairs Bureau of the prefecture. This means that the Chinese invaders have been concentrating all the powers since 2014 on the local governments. By doing so, the government benefited them a little and ordered them to find out people who had some problems in the village, at any grassroots level. So they actively detained people under various pretexts, such as not greeting the cadres, covering the official in dust etc. That means that China had already preplanned to concentrate the powers on them. These are the things I have heard with my own ears and seen with my own eyes.

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.