

Uyghur Tribunal – Fact Witness statement

UTFW2-072 – Amine Wahit

1. My name is Amine Wayit. I resided in the Uchtash Residential Community, Tengritagh District, Urumqi City. First, I want to testify about my brothers. My elder brother, Abdusopur Eli, is 52 years old. On the 16th of July 2016, he was deported to Uchturpan County, Aksu Prefecture from his place of business in Urumqi due to a government order enforcing the "return of the southern population living in Urumqi to their hometowns." He was sent to a camp. I have not heard from my brother ever since. I don't know if he is alive or dead. Until September 2016, I had been in touch with my younger brother (Abdushukur Eli) to inquire about my brother's condition. But, in September 2016, my younger brother was taken from his restaurant. I have had no contact with him since then. It's been four years now. I don't know if my brothers are alive or not.
2. My older sister, Patimen Qurban, was taken to a camp in Akchi County at the end of 2016 for no reason and remained there for four months. After being released from the camp in March 2017, she came to Urumqi for medical treatment. During that time, she met me for about a week. After returning home, she was taken to the camp again, this time because she met up with me. I heard that my sister was released in May 2020 but I could not communicate with her in any way possible. So far, I have not been able to contact my brothers or sister.
3. Below, I want to testify about what I saw during the month I went back home in March 2017 and returned in April. I returned home from Istanbul, Turkey on Sunday the 24th of March 2017. Before I returned home, my house had been sealed off by the Uchtash Residential Committee as a result of its policy of "temporary sealing homes whose owners are abroad." The day I returned home, I called the Chinese man (named Songliong) who was in charge of my affairs. He told me that I could open the door smoothly without tearing the seal but that he would check the next morning.

4. One of the things I noticed, when I went home in 2017, was that none of my relatives came to the airport to greet me. When I had returned home previously, my relatives always came to greet me. I was very surprised. When I got home, my neighbors told me: "None of the Uyghur books, the Qur'an or any such book materials should be stored at home. You have to collect and dispose of any that you have in the house before the Residential Committee member comes in the morning." That night, because I had a lot of books in my house, I took two boxes of books (all of which were legally published) and went to Toksun (a county two hours' drive away from Urumqi) in my family member's car to discard them as I could not find anywhere that had no cameras set up in Urumqi.

5. When I got home, I asked a relative to accompany me because I was alone. The Committee members were saw this through the camera. They came into my house at midnight and drove me out because I let a guest stay at my home without their permission. The house was in my name, it was the house that I had I bought myself but they kicked me out of it and sealed it. In the meantime, even my relatives could not bring me into their homes because it was also forbidden for them to allow others into their homes. As such, I stayed at a hotel for a week. The name of the hotel was 'Radio and Television Hotel' on Yan'an Road. I spent this week going to the Residential Committee every day - begging them, writing applications and letters of regret. I still remember the confession that I wrote before they finally opened my house. I can't forget the humiliation. I wrote many applications and, when I brought the petitions into the Chinese Party Secretary's office, he made me stand in front of him and said: "Read it yourself." I read my confession letter to him. He rudely asked me all sorts of questions over and over and then finally opened my house. There are a number of things that I noticed during my time there.

6. First: In 2017, there were far fewer Uyghurs in Urumqi. There were cameras everywhere. People were not allowed on the big roads. Barricades were put up on both sides of the road and people walked through there, between barricades and among cameras.

7. Second: Friends and relatives couldn't meet, dine or gather. Everyone, even relatives and friends, stayed away from people from abroad regardless of the reason for their stay there. My friends and relatives came to the place I did business and met me. They told me: "We've been sleeping with our clothes on for months." This was because at night, all of a sudden, the police would enter people's home and force them out. As no one knew who and what kind of people were being detained, people would talk to each other every day to ensure they were all right. The detentions were of a very large scale. On the other hand, the entire population from the southern prefectures (whether they were doing business or working in Urumqi) had been expelled completely. Even the families with children were forced to split up in the process. People from different parts of Urumqi, Tianshan District, Shuimuogou District, etc. could not get married without the district's permission. Otherwise, after the marriage, the groom would not be able to bring the bride to his district. Also, the selling of homes was banned. When one wanted to sell a house, he/she had to report to the state why he/she wanted to sell the house and what he/she would use the money for. Although it was one's own home, one had to state who was to buy the house. One was only able to sell it once the locals checked on the home buyer and wrote: "This person can buy the house and live in our area".

8. Third: No guests could be invited to one's house and friends could not stay at each other's house for more than half an hour. If you wanted to invite guests and friends over the holidays and weekends, you had to provide the identity of the guests and get permission from the local police. It was only after obtaining this permission that the guests could come. Until the guests left, one person from the area had to stay with those guests. Another thing was that all the houses were equipped with coded devices. Every day, the police officer in charge of the house came (once in the morning and once in the evening) to check on that code. I do not know what the code was for. From morning to evening, there would be guards at the entrance of every building. They monitored the cameras and asked questions such as: "Why did you come? Why are you coming in?" Meanwhile, when my sister came to Urumqi, she could not enter my house even once. I talked to my sister only when we dined or shopped together. That

was the situation, as I noticed it, in Urumqi in 2017. Since my return, I have had no contact whatsoever regarding my home nor my business.

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:

Date: