

Witness Statement

Zumret Dawut

1. My name is Zumret Dawut and I was born on 16 June 1982 in Ürümqi, East Turkistan. I got married to my husband, a Pakistani man, in 2005. We have three children. In 2016, we applied for visas to visit the United States. Later, Chinese officials requested that I return our passports to the Chinese authorities. In August 2017, I went to the Police Station in Ürümqi to return our passports (my children's and mine) as requested. At the Police Station, there were many other Uyghurs (including old people and women who had gone to Hajj) who were there for the same reason (to surrender their passports to the police). They took our biometric data, such as fingerprints, photos, and also asked me to sign a document.
2. In September 2016, Chinese authorities requested Uyghurs to return to their place of origin. I noticed that surveillance began to increase significantly in this period (eg. restricting exits from residential areas to just one exit, increased armed police presence in the street and security cameras). I also increasingly began hearing stories of police entering Uyghur homes and taking family members to the detention camps if, for instance, they had kitchen knives larger than a specific length.
3. In November 2016, the Chinese authorities began to build police stations every 300m in the residential areas of Ürümqi, bringing many Han Chinese men from other provinces to these stations (with at least 20 police at each station). They also asked us to hand in our devices such as computers or mobile phones to the police, where they were checked, and if, on these devices, they found applications such as What's App or Facebook, or images of flags of Turkey or the star and crescent, or verses from the Qur'an, the owners were considered "suspicious" and taken to the detention camps. The family members were not informed to which camps their relatives had been taken.
4. The Chinese police forced us to install a special application on our phone. After that, each time I said anything related to the Muslim religion, the police would call me immediately after and ask me what I had said. The police also installed an unknown device with QR code in my home and every two days, residential committee members would enter my home to scan this device. After that, even within my home, we were afraid to say anything related to the Chinese government or our Muslim religion. Our internet routers in our home were confiscated by the police and we were given new ones issued by the authorities. I felt as though we were constantly being monitored.

5. On Saturday, 31 March 2018, at around 9 or 10 o'clock in the morning, just as I was preparing lunch, I got a phone call from the police to report to the police station immediately. My husband was not at home at the time. He went to a bank. At the police station, they took my mobile phone and I waited for about 30 minutes. After that, two police officers came and took me by the arms. They took me down to the basement, where there were several interrogation rooms. I was asked to sit on an iron "tiger" chair, and my arms and feet were chained. I was then asked to wait until the interrogator arrived.
6. Two police officers arrived with several documents in their hands and began the interrogation. They asked me about my phone calls. They showed me a Pakistani number (with a 0092-country code) on my phone and they asked me who had called me from that number. I explained that it was my husband who called me from Pakistan, when he was there before. Then the officers left, and I felt a little relieved. However, after an hour, the police officers returned with copies of my bank accounts. They asked me about certain money transfers from Pakistani friend of my husband in Guangzho in my account. I explained that these related to an import / export company that I had established with my husband and that was registered under my name. At that stage, the police officers asked me to tell the truth and they hit me with the papers.
7. The chains began to hurt. I cried a lot and told the officers that I needed to go to the toilet. In the cell, there was a small toilet and the two male officers asked me to do my business there in front of them. I felt like an animal and very ashamed. When the interrogation continued, they asked me about my visits abroad. I had visited several countries including Japan and Singapore through Chinese travel agencies. I had also visited Pakistan only once privately, without using a Chinese travel agency. However, the officers once again asked me to tell the truth, they fastened the chains on my hands and hit me with plastic batons. They asked me to confess. They asked me why I had visited all these countries. They also asked me which Uyghurs I had met there. They asked me why I had applied for a US visa and which Uyghurs I knew in the US.
8. Then the police officers asked me why I had given birth to a third child. They asked whether my husband encouraged me to have more children. Or whether I had more children because of my Muslim religion.
9. The interrogation continued the whole night. Then, the next day, on Sunday, 1 April 2018, they took me from the basement of the police station to the first floor. There, I saw a police car with iron gratings arrive. A hood was placed over my head. I was taken into the car, with the hood still on, and the car drove for about one hour. I thought they were going to shoot me. However, when they took the hood off, I saw that I was in a kind of a military hospital with high barrier walls and razor wiring on the walls. The staff at this place wore police uniforms under their white gowns.

10. I saw that there were many Uyghur women in this place, including old women of about 60 – 70 years. In one room, they took our fingerprints and photos. In another room, they took a blood sample and placed it in a bag with the words “DNA” on it. In another room, they took our eye scans. And in the next room, they took vagina tests. And in another room, a doctor did another test that I did not know what it was. I was also forced to take an ultrasound. These tests took the whole day, as there were many women and many women, including myself, were crying.
11. They gave the tests results directly to the police officers who had taken me to this place. The police then took me to the car and placed the hood over my head. We travelled for about one and a half hours and when we arrived, and they took the hood off, I realised I was in the detention camp. The two police officers handed me over to the camp guards and they left.
12. The camp guards gave me grey camp clothes into which I had to change and asked me to put my old clothes into an envelope with my name on it. I had to change in front of two male officers and one female officers. I felt a lot of shame having to change in front of them. I was then taken into cell number 28. The size of the cell is about 25 m². There was a very strong smell – like a strong toilet smell - coming from this cell. In this cell, there were more than thirty women. Half of them were lying down in bed and half of them were standing. The lights had been turned off. The conditions in the cell were very cramped and not everyone could fit in the beds available in the cell. I soon realised that the women were taking it in turns: half were lying, and half were standing, and they changed every three hours.
13. I was feeling very weak as I had not eaten or drunk anything since the interrogation. I was also very worried thinking about my children, since I had heard of many people who had died in such camps. At that stage, I was so tired, I fell asleep. The next thing I remember was that next morning, I was woken up and we had one minute to wash our faces. The food quality was very bad, but as I was starving, I ate the food. Then it was time for the medicine. Every woman had to take this medicine by swallowing it. The camp guards then wore a glove on their hands and put their fingers in my mouth to check that I had swallowed it.
14. I noticed some women had very bad skin conditions because of the unsanitary conditions at the camp. They told us that they would disinfect us. Two guards in Hazmat suits came into the room and sprayed disinfectant directly onto the women. We were completely wet. Many women were screaming because the disinfectant was causing them pain. When the disinfectant covered my skin, I felt a strong burning sensation. This process lasted one hour.
15. There was an old woman who had diabetes, and I shared some of my bread with her. However, soon after, two camp guards came who saw that through the cameras and beat me hard. They told me that I was not allowed to share my food with others. As they beat me, I accidentally mentioned the name of Allah, and they beat me harder. This caused my ankles to become dislocated.

16. We were taken, with shackles on our feet, to a large hall, where we were made to sit for four or five hours at a time. There would be about 80-100 of us. This hall had iron fences and on the other side of these fences was the teacher. The hall had several portraits of Xi Jinping. We could not move as we were surrounded by camp guards. There was also many surveillance cameras and we had no privacy.
17. On the second day in the camp, I was taken to a room, where there were two carton boxes. These boxes were full of human hair from different women, including white hair. There, they cut my hair and I was so sad as in this room, I also saw white hairs of mothers and older women.
18. I also saw, in my cell, that on certain nights, the camp guards came to the cell to select young, pretty girls to take them away. When the girls returned, they were crying, and I could see bruises on them. But we could not even ask what had happened, because of the surveillance cameras. However, on one occasion, I was able to ask one sister a little older than me what had happened. She told me that they had undressed her, made her naked, beat here and the police officers urinated on her.
19. The women in the cell changed every night. On some nights, we were 37 in the same cell and on other nights were 20 in the same cell. I could recognise some of the women in my cell, as we were from the same district.
20. In addition to giving us medicine, they also took our blood every fifteen days. Every time, after they took my blood, I felt very dizzy. On two occasions while I was in the camp, I was also inoculated with a substance – I did not know what it was. I am not sure whether this was the effect of the medicine, but I began feeling very languid. I stopped thinking also about my children or about conditions outside the camp.
21. I was also regularly interrogated about my religion. I was asked, for instance, whether I believed in the existence of Allah. On one occasion, after the class, they asked us “Does Allah exist?” and I could not say “No”, so I stayed silent. And then they beat me. So, in the end, we had to learn to say that Allah does not exist. Then the camp guards compared Allah to Xi Jinping, stating that Allah does not exist, but Xi Jinping exists and did many good things for us. So, we then had to write several times about how many good things Xi Jinping had done for us.
22. In the camp, there were also some very small cells (of about 1 metre by 1 metre) in which you cannot lie down, but only stand. I did not go into these smaller rooms, but I heard from other women that they existed and those who were taken there did not receive food. The camp guards often threatened us with taking us there if we did not obey them.
23. In the camp, I was regularly beaten, but I was not raped. But I am sure that many other Uyghur women in the camp experienced rape.

24. While I was in the camp, I did not know into which camp I had been taken. But when I was released, after doing some research, I found that it was Beizhan camp. It was previously a school, but it was converted into a camp. The layout of the school was kept, but iron fences were installed, together with razor wire on the walls, and surveillance cameras.
25. On 2 June 2018, they released me from this camp, and they gave me back my clothes. They again placed a black hood over my head and drove me for about 1.5 to 2 hours. They took off the shackles from my feet. And when we arrived at the police station, they removed my handcuffs. Then Uyghur police came and treated me very well. They offered me tea. Then I saw my husband at the police station. They informed me that they were going to release me. We were asked to sign some forms, including a form where my husband had to declare that he voluntarily sent his wife to the detention camp. I was also forced to sign a form stating that I had religious extremist ideas and that is why I had to go to the camp. Both of us were forced to sign these papers, otherwise, I would not be released.
26. When I asked my husband how he had secured my release from the camp, he explained that he had gone round all the police stations in Urumqi to ask about my whereabouts. He challenged them, asking them to provide information about why they had arrested me and where they had taken me. The police officials told him that they could not reveal anything to him, because of orders from higher authorities. So, in the end, he went to the Pakistan Consulate in Beijing. There were also husbands of several other Uyghur women who, like me, had married Pakistani men. So, these husbands went to the Pakistani Consulate in Beijing to petition and protest, and to request the Consulate to request that the Chinese authorities provide information about their wives. Initially, the Consulate did not offer much help. My husband went to Beijing second time and threatened to speak to international media outlets. The Beijing authorities got in contact with my husband and asked him to stop speaking to the media. And in return, the authorities agreed to release me. They even bought the flight ticket to Ürümqi for that very evening.
27. On my release from the camp, I discovered that the Chinese authorities had instituted a forced “pairing” system, which authorised Han Chinese to live with Uyghur families. So, the authorities paired a family of four Han Chinese with my family (myself and my three children). They slept with us. They had to stay for 10 days in our home every month. I had to treat this family very well, including shopping for them. I also had to answer the questions they asked me correctly. We had to regularly send the Chinese authorities evidence that they were living with us, by submitting photos of us together.
28. This Han family also took my children to their rooms and asked them questions. I was always very worried that the children would say something wrong and I will be taken back to the camp. The ten days when this Han Chinese family lived with us

were very difficult. So, living in these conditions became very difficult and I asked my husband for us to move abroad.

29. Chinese authorities began forcing Chinese culture onto us. Every Monday morning, we were forced to attend a Chinese flag raising ceremony, which Uyghurs had to attend, but Han Chinese were exempt from attending. During this ceremony, we had to praise Xi Jinping and speak about ethnic harmony. We were also told to develop good relations with Han Chinese, and we were also encouraged to marry Han Chinese, to get better benefits from the government. We were forced to speak Chinese (not Uyghur-language) and so my three children had to only speak Chinese, including at school. Children were also forced to wear only Chinese traditional clothes during the festivals.
30. During one of the flag raising ceremonies, they asked mothers who had more than two children to stay after the ceremony, and the others could leave. We had to register our third child (as this was generally not allowed in China) and, I was told I had to pay a fine of 18000RMB for my third child. I was told this was not a fine but was for educational purposes. So, I paid the fine. Around November 2018, at another flag raising ceremony, the authorities again asked mothers who had more than two children to stay after the ceremony. The authorities read out a direct order that a list of around 200 mothers had to be sterilised, and my name was on that list.
31. When I informed my husband about this, he said that he would speak to the authorities. I was very weak after I was released from the camp and he was afraid that the sterilisation would severely impact on my health. My husband even offered to be sterilised himself, instead of me. But the authorities told him that this operation could not be done on foreigners. Then they started to threaten my husband that, if I did not agree to undergo the sterilisation operation, they would not allow him to stay in China.
32. I received an order from the authorities to go to the hospital on my own (without my husband). On 2 or 3 November 2018, a police car collected me (together with four other women) and took us to the hospital. I was terrified. I was not given any information about the operation. At one point, I was given anaesthetic and lost consciousness. When I came to my senses, I felt a lot of pain. After I started complaining, the nurse gave me a shot. I was told that I had to wait two hours before being able to leave the hospital. After that, I was taken home. And after that, I had to take anti-inflammatory medicine for seven days.
33. During the time I was recovering at home, the “paired” Han Chinese family again came to live with us. They asked me many questions about what I thought about this operation and whether I agreed with it. I felt as though I was under constant surveillance. But, of course, I could not tell them what I really thought, even though, I was silently very sad, as they had just removed an organ from my body and had

made me sterile. They made it impossible for me to have more children in the future (even though I wished to).

34. My husband and I decided we wanted to leave China with our family. But the Chinese authorities stated that I did not have sufficiently strong relations with Han Chinese to receive my passport. I mentioned that I had a Han Chinese family living with me at home. But they told me this was not sufficient. They mentioned that there was an old Han Chinese lady who had cancer and needed money. So, I gave her 15000RMB. However, because I had been to the camp, the issuance of my passport was blocked by the police. At that stage, my husband threatened to go back to the Pakistani Consulate in Beijing. So, the authorities asked me to give another 15000RMB to this old Han Chinese lady.
35. On 7 or 8 January 2019, I got my passport back from the authorities and I was allowed to buy a return air ticket to Islamabad. On my residence registry card, I had to agree to delete my religion as being Islam and instead write "no religion." On 27 – 29 January 2019, I had to report to a police station to answer several questions about my relatives abroad and whether I planned to reveal anything about the camps. I answered that I had no relatives, and I undertook not to reveal anything about the camps. I was finally allowed to travel out of China with my family on 30 January 2019.
36. When I was in Pakistan, I couldn't say anything, having felt that I wasn't safe there, as Pakistan has good relation with China. When I came to the US, I started talking about my ordeal to the media. Then I got calls from my brother back in Ürümqi asking me to stop, in one occasion he was pleading me by saying my father was with the police.
37. I learned that my father was harassed many times by the police because of me. I testified at the United Nations on September 23, 2019, and learned on October 12 that my father passed away. My father was a very healthy man. I am 100% convinced that Chinese government mentally or physically abused my father and caused his death.
38. After I testified abroad, the Chinese Foreign Ministry claimed that I was a liar, showing my picture during a press conference. This had put a lot of stress on me. The Chinese government also made threatening call asking me to stay silent and to cherish my days with my children. Even though I am in the United States, I am still worried about the safety of my children. My period had stopped due to unknown medicines given at the camp. I had to be treated in the United States. I underwent surgery on March 10 this year. Because the uterus was full of blood and there was a 95% chance of developing cancer. I still need to be treated. On April 15, I will have my second surgery. All of these are, of course, the result of the Chinese government's persecution of me in the camp.

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

April 7, 2021

The witness has signed a Uyghur translation of this statement.