

## Witness Statement

1. My name is Melikzat Habibul and I was born on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1984 in Turpan city. In October 2010, I travelled to Egypt with my husband, Kuduse Abdukader. We had the project of creating a business with my sister, Bahargul Habibul, initially between China and Turkey. So, we moved to Turkey on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2014. I had originally applied for a Turkish visa which had been refused, but the visa was granted when I made the request from Egypt.
2. After this, we had a sort of family reunion in Turkey, as my family came to visit us, including my parents, my brother Memet Habibul. They stayed for a while and, as they returned to China, their passports were seized at the airport.
3. It was in February 2015 that my sister Bahargul and I started doing business between Turkey and Turpan city, in Xinjiang, selling and exporting clothes to East Turkestan through online shopping. My sister had opened a Chinese bank account for business purposes. In 2016, the authorities apparently decided that we were earning too much money and about \$20,000 were confiscated from this business account. Of course, we discussed the subject of this confiscated money, I thought of going back to China to ask for that money to be given back to us. In the end we decided not to do this. In May 2017, I started receiving calls from my father, asking me to come back to China, otherwise there would be retribution and my family would be taken to camps. I was scared of going home, because I feared what might happen when I do, and also, I did not really believe, then, that they would put all my relatives in jail if I did not come back. I thought “we have teachers and police agents in the family, why would they be put in a re-education camp?” So, I just said that I couldn’t because I did not have my passport. He said we could go the Embassy and request a kind of travel visa, but we did not. My father also tried to reach out to my husband, whose brother was already detained in a camp, to convince him that he needed to come back to take care of his brother. Again, we refused.
4. On 9<sup>th</sup> June 2017 it was the last time that I was able to contact my family. I believe that on the next day, my mother and sister were taken to a concentration camp. I tried to find information about their whereabouts, but no one was able to help me. I do know that something happened: my sister was always very responsive on the phone, she would always answer text messages right away, and she had never failed to answer, especially since we were in business together.
  - a. My older brother Memet was detained from 30<sup>th</sup> April 2017. He is 48 years old; he has two children and he used to work in insurance. I know this because my sister was still responding to me at the time, and she told me. He was called to a meeting with police and did not come back. I found out that he was sentenced to three years in prison for going to Turkey. Three years have passed, but he is not free. I got this information in September 2020 from a client of mine, who enquired about my family. That same client who gave me this information also told me that her own sister had been sentenced to twenty years and that she has had to look

after her child because no one else can. Also, in September 2018 I was able to communicate with my uncle's daughter who told me that everyone in my family had been taken to a camp, except for one person, the daughter of my uncle.

- b. I mentioned my sister Bahargul earlier, the one I was doing business with. She was born 30<sup>th</sup> April 1983 and graduated as an accountant. She was taken to the camp with my brother on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2017. Her husband lost his job after she was detained, and he was sent to a village to work forcibly as construction worker. However, her husband got his original job back after I started to testify for my family on social media. I heard there was a judicial process against her in May 2019, but I had no news following that, until November 2019 when I learnt she had been sentenced to five years in jail. I do not know what the specific reason for her imprisonment is. This information came from one of my clients in China.
  - c. My mother, Mariam Tursun, was born on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1947 in Turpan city. She used to work in a post office. She is now 74 years old. From what I know, on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2017, she was detained in a re-education camp and released in January 2019. She has had heart problems in the past, but now I have no idea how she is faring, how her health is.
  - d. My father, Habibul Abdul, was born on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1941 and he was a policeman in Turpan for thirty years. He was detained in the same period as my mom, also most probably because of the trips to Egypt and Turkey. He was detained sometime in 2017 but also released in January 2019. In April 2020 he was arrested again and sent to a camp. He was supposed to be released in October 2020, but as far as I am aware, he was not released then.
  - e. My sister Aigul Habibul, a mother of two, was taken to a camp in October 2017, and also released in January 2019. She used to have a regular work, she worked as a teacher for 25 years, but right now it is really difficult for the people who have faced detention to be hired anymore so I believe that she is unemployed.
  - f. My second brother, Alim Habibul (born on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1975) had been working as a prison guard in Turpan since 1997. He has a wife and two children. He was also taken to a camp in October 2017 and was then sentenced to three years in jail in November 2019, according to my friend from Shanghai. He should have been released in October 2020 but I still have no information on whether he came out or not. I have two other brothers who also did time in jail, but I know nothing about what happened to them, if they were released or if they are alive and well.
  - g. Another of my sisters, Mihray Habibul (born 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1976 in Turpan) is 46 years old, and she was working as a policewoman for twenty years until she was detained in a camp in October 2018. In November 2019 she was sentenced to jail without due process.
5. I also obtained some of this information from one of my Han Chinese friends, from Shanghai, whom I had asked to call my family to enquire about them. This friend of mine finally travelled to East Turkestan in May 2020. He had problems for that: he was taken to the police and they questioned him for two days because he had contacts with Uyghurs, and it was very difficult for him to travel

back to Shanghai. If he had resided in Xinjiang, he would probably have had a lot more problems.

6. As I learnt all this, I started becoming active particularly on social media, to share the situation and testify. In April 2020, my brother contacted me through a friend to ask me to send receipts for all the transactions that my sister Bahargul and I made for our business, to help my sister's case. He said he needed it within a week. I sent the receipts through internet to a friend in Urumqi. This friend gave it to the court. I called the court in China to enquire about these receipts and follow-up on my sister's case. But every time I mention my sister's name they cut the call. I wanted to tell them that I sent the receipt and that they should release her, but it never happened. I do not even know how she is doing, if she is healthy and well. From what I know, the court has refused to release her. I have reported all of this to Radio Free Asia.
7. My husband's older brother, Abdurehim Abdukader (born in 1969) was sent to a camp in May 2015 because he sent money to his brother, my husband, in Turkey. In August 2016 he was apparently released, but he was detained again in April 2017. In May 2020, his detention was eased as he is allowed to go home to his family on weekends, but he must go back to the camp from Monday to Friday. I know this from another Han Chinese friend, from Beijing, who travelled to Aksu, in Xinjiang, to enquire about our family. Abdurehim is a farmer, and he used to own 350 acres which were confiscated by the government. They left him a small piece of land, like a small garden, but for a big fee. My husband is one of nine siblings, and three of them were taken to camps as well. According to the Aksu list, one of his brothers was detained for about three years in a camp. His family used to own a cotton business before, but now they are being sent to Aksu to work in a factory. When they used to be owners, now they are forced to do manual work. Shemsinur Abdurehim, the daughter of Abdurehim who was born on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1996, was sentenced in April 2015 to three years in prison for sending money to us in Turkey. She is detained in Kurla. Even though her sentence was three years, she was not released, after spending one year in the camp, she was sent to a forced labour camp in Ghulja. In mid-2020 she was released after I started testifying on social media and is now in her home in Aksu. I received this information from friends in Mainland China.