

Uyghur Tribunal – Fact Witness statement

UTFW2-058 – Rizwangul NurMuhammad

1. I've made numerous attempts to learn about my brother's situation since early 2017. I've gathered some information over the last five years, which I'll present in this witness statement. Please keep in mind that the time something happened does not correspond to the time I learned about it. Usually, I find out about an incident after it has already happened.
2. Mewlan NurMuhammad, officially recorded as Nuermaimaiti MAIWULANI, born on 05 Jun 1986. He was 31 years old, mentally and physically healthy, married with one son, and employed full-time as an Internet Technician at China Telecom Bole city branch at the time when he was arbitrarily detained in Jan 2017.
3. On 17 January 2017, Mewlan was arrested in a local restaurant (name unknown) in Bole City, Xinjiang, China, while having his lunch during his lunch break from work.
4. During Mewlan's lunch break from full-time work, police officers (not sure how many) dressed in civilian clothes stormed the restaurant where he was eating and arrested him without explanation or identification. These officers are members of the National Security Brigade, which is overseen by the Bole City Public Security Bureau (博乐市公安局) in Bole, Xinjiang, China. It should be noted that it is common practice in Xinjiang for local police officers dressed in civilian clothing to appear in public and arrest civilians without explanation or identification.
5. Following this, Mewlan was taken to a Detention Station House for questioning; it was expected that he would be released once the questioning was completed because he had done nothing wrong and his arrest must be a mistake. However, he was still not released. After five months. In June 2017, he was transferred from the detention facility to what Chinese authority claims as re-education camp, concentration camp in nature, in Bole.

6. After some time, he was transferred to a prison in Bole city. After a while, he was transferred from the prison to a concentration camp. This time, there was again hope that he would be released from the concentration camp. In line with this expectation, local authorities informed Mewlan's family, his mother and wife, in March 2019 that Mewlan will be released and asked them to prepare clothes for him. Instead of being released, he was transferred again from the concentration camp to a prison in Bole city in April 2019.
7. On April 17, 2019, I submitted a Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances Communication Form to the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances with legal advice and service from a lawyer based in New Zealand.
8. On September 2, 2019, the Chinese government responded to a WGEID inquiry about Mewlan by stating that: "Nuermaimaiti Maiwulani, male, unemployed, ID no. 652701198606050816, registered permanent residence in Bole city Bozhou, Xinjiang. On 8 August, 2017, he was sentenced to 9 years' imprisonment and 4 years of deprivation of political rights for splitting the State".
9. On December 19, 2019, three months after receiving it, the UN informed me of the Chinese government's response.
10. On September 17, 2019, Mewlan was transferred from a prison in Bole city to a prison in Shehezi city, 374 kilometres away from his hometown of Bole.
11. I also managed to obtain further details that states Mewlan is being held in First Supervision District, Beiye Prison, the 8th Division of Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, Beiye Town, Shihezi Ken District, Shihezi City, Xinjiang, China. In Chinese: 新疆维吾尔自治区石河子市石河子垦区北野镇新疆生产建设兵团农八师北野监狱一监区. Mewlan's prisoner number is: 9282011831.
12. On June 10 2020, the Chinese Embassy in New Zealand responded to a New Zealand government inquiry about Mewlan, stating that he is currently serving a sentence in Beiye Prison in Shihezi City, Xinjiang, China.

13. In summary, Mewlan was taken for questioning, then moved to a concentration camp, then transferred several times between concentration camps and prisons in Bole city until he was transferred to Beiye prison in Shihezi City, Bingtuan.
14. There has been no official explanation for why he was arrested and sentenced. The reason for the arrest is unknown. To the best of my knowledge, no trial has taken place.
15. Mewlan's detention was unjustified. Mewlan is a law-abiding citizen who has never violated the government or the law. He is not a threat to the state. He's been imprisoned for over five years and is being punished for a crime he didn't commit.
16. His detention could not be justified for any reason. His personality and mindset behind his decisions to study and work, as well as his way of life, all suggest that he is nothing more than an ordinary Uyghur. Mewlan is a fit, easy-going person who is very simple, down-to-earth, nice, and friendly. He is a family oriented young father who is working hard to feed and care for his family.
17. His full-time job at China Telecom as a Network Technician with a focus on Fibre internet and his new business require him to build good relationships with clients from various cultures, including Chinese, Uyghur, Kazakh, Huizu, and Mongol. He also speaks Chinese fluently. He was able to fulfill his responsibilities at his full-time job with Telecom, and he even received support from China Telecom to start a new business providing internet-related services. The successful registration of his own business also demonstrates that he passed the police check required for such registration in Xinjiang. We can get to his company's information on the official website by clicking on this link: <https://www.qixin.com/company/b47b1284-634e-4df9-8f75-083e0d874151> (recorded 统一社会信用代码 : 91652701MA777BXB4E).
18. The only reason for his detention could be that he travelled to Turkey for study purposes between 2012 and 2014. According to reports, one of the reasons Uyghurs are being detained is that they have travelled to countries on an official list of "26 sensitive countries," one of which is Turkey. In their report, "China's Campaign of Repression Against Xinjiang's Muslims," Human Rights Watch stated that "people

who have been to these countries, have families there, or otherwise communicate with people there have been interrogated, detained, and even tried and imprisoned."

19. From 2012 to 2014, Mewlan studied Turkish language in Turkey. At the time, Turkey and China had a good business relationship, and there were many business opportunities in Xinjiang that required Turkish language skills. It was very simple to obtain a visa and travel to Turkey at the time.
20. He returned to Bole City in June 2014. Then he started working full-time and got married. In April 2016, he had a son. In addition to his full-time job, he registered his own business at the end of 2016.
21. Why would he return from Turkey to China if he was theoretically guilty of something, especially something as serious as the charges against him. Furthermore, there was a two-and-a-half-year gap between his return from Turkey in June 2014 and his arrest in January 2017. Mewlan would have been arrested upon his arrival in 2014 if he had been found guilty. In addition, as mentioned before, the authorities would have known if Mewlan had committed any offenses. A successful registration of his business demonstrates that he passed the police check required for such registration in Xinjiang.
22. On September 27, 2017, Radio Free Asia reported that local authorities had imprisoned at least six Uyghurs who had traveled to Turkey for educational purposes, and my brother, Mewlan, was mentioned in the report. Because my brother had been in Turkey for about two years, and the other Uyghurs mentioned are from the same Bole city, and their detention dates are the same. As a result, I believe the 'Mewlan' mentioned in the report is my brother. Through word of mouth, it is also confirmed that my brother Mewlan is one of the six Uyghurs arrested. It's reported that an official investigation into his activities in Turkey discovered that he was never involved in "abnormal activities," and that his only intention was to study.
23. RFA report link: <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/students-09272017160616.html>

24. Mewlan has no criminal history. He is neither a separatist, an extremist, nor a terrorist. He did not establish religious practises, nor did he grow a beard. He did not participate in any terrorist or separatist actions. A visit to a foreign country cannot be used as a valid ground for imprisonment. The Chinese government listed 26 countries as sensitive destinations without informing its citizens and imprisoned those who visited those sites. This is an irresponsible behaviour tinged with unfairness and bullying.
25. Mewlan was arbitrarily arrested in January 2017 and has been in prison for five years. I'm worried about his physical and mental health. I haven't spoken to him since he was detained, and I haven't even heard his voice since January 2017.
26. Based on the experiences described by former detainees, I am convinced that he is subjected to endless interrogations in concentration camps and prisons – or worse – torture, humiliating treatments, brainwashing, poor living conditions, and not to mention malnutrition, sleep deprivation, and so on; some detainees did not survive, and others died not long after they were released from those concentration camps. My brother was a physically fit person, but he used to get earaches on occasion. I'm concerned about whether he received treatment or if his earache has returned or worsened. I heard that detainees received little or no medical care, not to mention humiliating treatment in concentration camps and prisons.
27. Mewlan's imprisonment is unfair, unjust as he was imprisoned for a crime he did not commit. His rights have been violated. This is unbelievable and unacceptable. Nine years is more than simply a number; it is an injustice. Due to this injustice, Mewlan's life and youth are being languishing in prison, a place where he does not belong, not even for a single day.
28. Mewlan must be released immediately and unconditionally and reunited with his family. And he must be compensated for the five years he has been arbitrarily detained since January 17, 2017.

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: