



AN INTERNATIONAL PEOPLE'S TRIBUNAL

Witness Name: Maya Wang		
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1 **10 September 2021 (7:38:58 – 8:39:40)**

2 **Maya Wang**

3

4 MAYA WANG – Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify and for the
5 introduction. The introduction very well aligns with the specific piece of evidence we
6 will be discussing today. The Aksu list published in December 2020, is a leaked list of
7 around 200 detainees. It is our third report of Xinjiang’s use of big data system
8 integrated joint operation platform that the police use to survey the population in
9 Xinjiang. The Integrated Joint Operation Platform aggregates data on people in
10 Xinjiang and flags those it deems potentially dangerous. Some are then interrogated
11 and sent to camps and prisons. We have more evidence on the IJOP. In terms of the
12 Aksu list the evidence we submitted discusses how we extensively verified the list. I
13 am happy to discuss that. It includes mobile phone numbers, Id numbers, as well as
14 the geographical coordinates of information sent by the source. I will talk about what
15 the Aksu list shows. It shows the authorities are using the IJOP system which flags
16 people’s relationships, communications and movements, as well as if they are
17 travelling or staying with someone deemed suspicious. The examination of the list
18 suggests the authorities consider the following behaviour suspicious: practising Islam
19 in ways not authorised, studying the Quran without state permission, allowing children
20 to do so, using suspicious software, travelling to suspicious countries such as Saudi
21 Arabia, Turkey, travelling around without authorities' authorisation, going off grid such
22 as switching off their phone, having mismatched identity such as car driving a car
23 which did not belong to them, downloading extremist software, have untrustworthy
24 thoughts, being young, being born before the 1980s and 90s, having unstable thoughts

25 or improper sexual relationships. In some cases this behaviour happens many years
26 earlier. On the list you can see the authorities refer to behaviour from mid 80s, 90s,
27 mid 2000s, 3 decades before the crackdown even began. Although the authorities use
28 the word terrorism and extremism for people on list, the allegation does not appear to
29 refer to these people having committed, or incited the act of violence. About 1 in 5
30 people are being attacked by the IJOP for downloading terrorist content, 4 in 5 people
31 are detained as they are related to or know someone who had downloaded such
32 content. The examination of the list also suggests Turkic populations are presumed
33 guilty until proven innocent. A man was sent to political camp because 'suspicion of
34 him cannot be eliminated and would require further examination'. Consistent with
35 rhetoric, education camps are preventative detention. The relevant behaviour is
36 deemed suspicious but not criminal. They are held there until their loyalty can be
37 ascertained. I am now happy to take any questions.

38 *COUNSEL – My first question relates to IJOP. I'd like to get a sense of how much and*
39 *the extent of information it collects. If you start from moment a person wakes up, goes*
40 *out who they meet, after they return home; how much of these daily activities are*
41 *captured and recorded on IJOP?*

42 MW – To the extent of my knowledge, a person's daily activity from the moment they
43 leave the house is captured by the systems that surround them. We are talking about
44 surveillance cameras, data doors (when people go through checkpoints collect iris
45 scanning, surreptitiously capturing them) crossroad, go to supermarket – all this
46 information is recorded.

47 *COUNSEL – To the degree you know, is there the same degree of surveillance on*
48 *Han Chinese?*

49 MW – Systems cover Xinjiang, naturally capture all residents there, from the
50 information we analyse, it is only Turkic peoples whose information is used in the way
51 that would lead to first of all greater scrutiny and presumed guilty until proven innocent.
52 In practice you have Han Chinese members the vast majority are impacted by IJOP
53 system but examining behaviour is generally over Uyghurs. It is entirely Uyghurs.

54 *COUNSEL – Could you expand slightly on this point, on basis of this system and*
55 *policies, Uyghurs presumed guilty until otherwise and how that operates.*

56 MW – There is a mass surveillance system that collects data on everyone without any
57 law at all to specify narrowly what kind of behaviour would trigger a particular reaction.
58 Data is general, in addition to that if you look at official literature, the authority's
59 terminology is that everyone who ought to be detained should be detained – so it does
60 not presume that people are innocent until proven guilty. In fact, the official language
61 suggests that to extent possible ethnic priorities should be held in facilities until they
62 can be vetted and proven safe.

63 *COUNSEL – In your report you mention the system ‘arbitrarily selects Turkic Muslims*
64 *for detention’ can you tell us what you mean by arbitrarily’ and why it has a bias?*

65 MW – First, the implementation of the system itself, the Turkic people are when
66 aligning to go through checkpoints, Han people are waved through without the same
67 checking for the minorities. Second the term arbitrary refers to much of behaviour
68 under surveillance and flagged has no basis in Chinese law. The law does not say that
69 if you use WhatsApp or Sapia (a bio sharing application) is against the law, it does not
70 say travelling outside Aksu region or going to Afghanistan or Turkey is going against
71 Chinese law. So, these punishments are targeted at minorities are arbitrary and not
72 based in law.

73 *COUNSEL – Sounds to me the selection of Turkic minorities, or Uyghur minorities is*
74 *far from arbitrary and is purposeful and targeted and focused on these minorities.*
75 *Would you agree? If so, what is the purpose of targeting them through this system?*

76 MW – I agree. The word arbitrary refers mostly to fact it is completely outside the law
77 (the mass surveillance and political education system). The crackdown taking place is
78 targeted at Turkic people with the explicit intention to transform or eradicate their
79 deviant thoughts, to transform them into loyal subjects of the CCP.

80 *COUNSEL – Given your research of policies in the area, does this targeting of such*
81 *minorities is a leg in a broader plan towards total control of these minorities in the*
82 *area?*

83 MW – It would appear it is part of the CCPs plan to force assimilate minorities under
84 the rubric of Han centric view of future China. Because Uyghurs and other Turkic
85 people are considered more against/disobedient or minority groups they are targeted
86 specifically for these abuses with the intention to force assimilation and toward an ideal
87 of Han identity.

88 *COUNSEL – The main way of not being flagged is not to be Uyghur, not to practice*
89 *Uyghur religion or practices, is that correct?*

90 MW – It is, but beyond that you have to prove with all the biases against you that you
91 are not sick. You have to do much more than, just abandon your identity.

92 *PANEL – First I want to speak in relation to the Aksu list, asking questions about*
93 *verification, secondly some questions on its specific substantive content. On the*
94 *verification – when you received the document, presumably your first step was to think*
95 *about how you might check and satisfy yourself as to its veracity. What steps did you*
96 *take?*

97 MW – We received the list from an anonymous source sent to us in 2018. In fact, it
98 was sent to Radio Free Asia's Uyghur service. They handed it to us in August 2020
99 after delay due to it was not clear it was sitting there. Human Rights Watch used audio
100 on list to verify its authenticity. I will explain the steps.

101 We shared the list with the Uyghur diaspora from that region (specifically Aksu) - we
102 identified 18 names. There were about 200 ID numbers unique we checked on an
103 official ID database, which is a small database of all ID's in China, so we were able to
104 match 2 of them. Other databases were leaked by a separate person, and reported by
105 the Intercept – we checked these and a third of ID's matched the database based in
106 Urumqi. The list contained 27 unique phone numbers; 14 we could match on WeChat.
107 In most cases the numbers were from Aksu. 2 out of 27 were based outside of China
108 – we called this number, the one person who picked up was a woman who identified
109 her sisters ID on the list. The source who sent us the list attached a few other pieces
110 of evidence. We were able to perform analysis on the information and found the
111 geographical coordinates, shows the information was sent from a large complex,
112 political camp by Australian Policy. Using this we were confident the Aksu list came
113 from a particular facility in Aksu. I'm obscuring some details to protect the identity of
114 the source.

115 *PANEL – Can I ask you to assure the tribunal that you approached with the document*
116 *with an open mind as to it being genuine and in particular as you went through process,*
117 *did anything give you pause to consider if had confirmation bias, or if mind was open*
118 *to veracity of the document?*

119 MW – In general, at Human Rights Watch we take the evidence with high level of
120 scepticism – in this case we did very extensive steps of information to verify the list.

121 Having said that I think bias does exist, so we had discussed very extensively and
122 carefully what the list shows and what we know about the list.

123 *PANEL – Apart from the PRC, has any academic opinion from outside the PRC has*
124 *expressed doubts as to the document status as a genuine spreadsheet?*

125 MW – The Chinese government has provided specific feedback – we sent the list in
126 original form to two specialists on Xinjiang who looked at terms and language in list
127 are consistent with what they known of the Xinjiang crackdown and of official
128 documents.

129 *PANEL – Moving to the substantive content of the list, is there something known about*
130 *person who leaked it? Can you tell us in your view might be the motivation of person*
131 *who leaked it as they did?*

132 MW – I cannot ascribe very much of source obviously and have to stay close to what
133 we published. It would appear to have come from a detention facility or complex of
134 detention facilities that previously identified as political education camp. I believe the
135 person has some capacity as a worker in that facility, and there's no message attached
136 to any of this information. I believe that it is possible that the person thinks this has to
137 be exposed or come to light in some ways. Beyond that it is hard to judge the specific
138 motivation of this specific person.

139 *PANEL – Is this the case that the document on its face evidences intensive monitoring*
140 *of the practice of detention and monitoring of the effects of detention?*

141 MW – The list itself would suggest the authorities keep meticulous records of the
142 method of detention. The impact is not contained in the Aksu list. It would be in a
143 separate list leaked by another researcher which shows the impact – what happens to

144 detainees after they are subject to political detention such as leading to re-education,
145 detention or imprisonment.

146 *PANEL – That column you referred to, I presume is a specific column in the*
147 *spreadsheet, is that akin to a management category which indicates the level of*
148 *management that should be attached to an individual?*

149 MW – Referring to strict management versus ordinary level. In some cases, it is
150 indicated some people are subject to more strict management procedures.

151 *PANEL – Can you confirm whether in your knowledge everyone whose name is on*
152 *the list is Uyghur?*

153 MW – Yes.

154 *PANEL – To what degree in your assessment the Aksu list is integrated with other*
155 *aspects of security and surveillance systems that the tribunal has heard about, in*
156 *particular IJOP. Is the spreadsheet and IJOP system integrated – could they be*
157 *envisaged as living independent lives? Could they exist without each other? To what*
158 *extent are they intertwined.*

159 MW – They are intertwined in extent Aksu list is people who have been flagged by
160 IJOP system. It cannot exist without the IJOP. The precise structure is hard to gauge
161 and as a researcher we don't know how the particular documents live in the data
162 systems.

163 *PANEL – We don't know a great deal about the authors of the list, but what we can*
164 *presume is visible to us is administrative micromechanics, the mechanics of how*
165 *people administer in a penal or quasi-penal system. Could you say anything to us to*
166 *reflect on what the role of the judicial system is here. So, articles 37 of the constitution*

167 *states that all arrests must be made either by a prosecuting agency or ordered by the*
168 *courts, but is it the case that neither of those agencies are involved in the detentions*
169 *here, is this a record of extra judicial practices?*

170 MW – None of judicial system is involved in detention of the people on the list, it is
171 completely extrajudicial.

172 *PANEL – There is another Human Rights Watch report called ‘Break their lineage,*
173 *break their roots’ there is one paragraph I want to read into the evidence. The passage*
174 *reads ‘the United States state department and parliaments of Canada and Netherlands*
175 *have determined China's conduct constitutes genocide under international law.*
176 *Human Rights Watch has not documented the existence of genocidal intent at this*
177 *time. Nonetheless nothing in this report precludes such finding, if such evidence*
178 *emerges, the acts committed against Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang protected by 1948*
179 *genocide convention, could also support a finding of genocide’. This says Human*
180 *Rights Watch has not documented genocidal intent, does this remain Human Rights*
181 *Watch’s position?*

182 MW – Yes.

183 *PANEL – We have heard wide ranging evidence and opinions as to the motives of the*
184 *state I regard to treatment of minority population in Xinjiang and inter alia it's not an*
185 *exhaustive list it has been suggested this might include a desire for land and*
186 *resources, the Belt and Road Initiative and strategic policies around it. The other side*
187 *of the coin is the inability for state party to broke any kind of competition for its sole*
188 *loyalty, a desire for homogeneity of the population – do you have a view on any other*
189 *those, or specifics in regard to priorities in your opinion? And anything else that could*
190 *come to mind to notable intent?*

191 MW – Of course, the Chinese government is opaque – this is consistent of increasing
192 pressure of presidency that the region of Xinjiang has been repressive for long time,
193 more repressed than other regions, it also can go further into that scale. Having said
194 that the Chinese government’s attitude as to invent itself great nation, it is using
195 minorities to reflect itself as great by subjugating another people to its power. I think
196 that is the general purpose of the crackdown. It generally has a life of its own. What
197 that means is police departments claims and tries to get greater resources by claiming
198 there is a big problem in Xinjiang, initially small problems have been reinvented as
199 bigger problem. We see the human cost of a system where crackdowns are held up
200 as government model to get promoted to the party system.

201 *PANEL – Can you throw any light, the region has become an open-air prison and IJOP*
202 *is an important component of that to survey its entire population, is that something you*
203 *would recognise, difference between incarcerated between four walls and what occurs*
204 *in the region is narrower in UK or US?*

205 MW – Of course, Xinjiang is probably a pretty difficult experience. Having said that the
206 description of open-air prison is quite accurate. One element of crackdown that has
207 not received as much attention is variable levels of controls which are made possible
208 by IJOP. People flagged by the system for different restrictions, some people labelled
209 to only move around in their village or town. If can go for work that day, seek
210 permission to commute. Other people are only allowed to be in that prefecture or go
211 to Urumqi. Most Uyghurs have had their passports confiscated so cannot leave China.
212 These are different levels of restrictions accorded to different people depending on
213 relationships and level of threats to authority. No other government in the world or
214 history has been able to categorise people in relation to threat implemented across a

215 region so large a land mass. Xinjiang also lies in the ability of the authorities to control
216 over large population of people.

217 *PANEL – In your experience when researching in this country, is it conceivable the*
218 *policies being enacted at regional level could have emanated from anywhere other*
219 *than central state of Beijing?*

220 MW – General policies, no could not have originated anywhere without Beijing's
221 explicit approval, having said that the specific designs of the system probably has quite
222 a lot of local variations. The general policy would have to be directed by Beijing.

223 *PANEL – I want to position NGOs such as NGOs such as Human Rights Watch in the*
224 *world order. NGOs like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty are major important*
225 *components of the modern world, do you accept that?*

226 MW – I would say so. I hope so if we can have human rights.

227 *PANEL – So much are the big NGOs part of the world order that they find themselves*
228 *criticised for being either political or subject to political pressure. The complaints may*
229 *not be justified but that is the sort of complaint that can be made against them.*

230 MW – Yes.

231 *PANEL – Both those organisations in reporting rarely name witnesses and more often*
232 *or perhaps nearly always maintain confidentiality and anonymity of witnesses in*
233 *footnotes where a witness is referred to in some ways.*

234 MW – Yes, in Xinjiang.

235 *PANEL – Normally, there may be exceptions. That is the normal practice of Human*
236 *Rights Watch and Amnesty. Are you aware Amnesty has also prepared a report on*
237 *the allegations of genocide against the PRC in respect of the Uyghur people?*

238 MW – I am not aware of that specific report by Amnesty. Increasingly the use of
239 pseudonym has been a long-standing practice in Xinjiang for the repercussions it
240 would lead to increasingly in China for our work. In other parts of the world, it is not
241 common practice.

242 *PANEL – By relying and anonymising witnesses the big human rights organisations*
243 *rely on the public reposing trust in them to be honest and accurate in their reporting.*

244 MW – That would be a part of the reporting as you might be able to see a large report
245 relies on official sources which have been openly available, also much of the
246 documentation from the IJOP.

247 *PANEL – I am dealing with only evidence coming from individuals and their*
248 *anonymisation. Are you aware of two other reports, one from a chamber of barristers*
249 *in London and the other from the British human rights bar committee dealing with*
250 *allegations of genocide?*

251 MW – I have not seen others specifically on the issue of genocide.

252 *PANEL – To return to generality the way Human Rights Watch and Amnesty prepare*
253 *their reports. In 2014 reports on entirely different subject matter, North Korea was*
254 *made at the instigation of the UN Human Rights Council by Justice Kirby, Australia's*
255 *top court, and Sonia Biserco, are you aware of this?*

256 MW – I am aware of it.

257 *PANEL – Are you aware to prepare that report, Justice Kirby held open public evidence*
258 *hearings with witnesses giving evidence, just as witnesses are giving evidence in this*
259 *tribunal?*

260 MW – Yes.

261 *PANEL – Are you aware that in doing that, in having open and public hearings, Justice*
262 *Kirby was changing UN practice, which was opposed to such practices?*

263 MW – No, I have not been following that.

264 *PANEL – This tribunal is hearing evidence in public with witnesses almost all*
265 *appearing with name and image available for the public to view. Do you accept that in*
266 *the modern world this form of tribunal open and public, following Justice Kirby’s lead,*
267 *is the best type of method to hear evidence where it is possible?*

268 MW – Yes.

269 *PANEL – To go back to the IJOP, you described its sophistication as a system to*
270 *exercise control in the implementation of policies. How would you compare it with*
271 *whatever is happening in the rest of China in the use of technologies? Is it much more*
272 *advanced, is it similar?*

273 MW – Push back on the idea of sophisticated or advanced systems, they are intrusive.
274 One cannot say that the use of WhatsApp is terrorism, the only shocking aspect to the
275 systems is that they are unaccountable, this is why certain variables are used to
276 indicate a particulate crime. The Xinjiang use of mass systems reflects in elsewhere
277 in China but also differs. Nowhere else in China are people directly put into the
278 detention centre. In Xinjiang its clear use of surveillance is a feature of the crackdown,
279 and a feature of this. In other parts of China, we have seen other systems of ID
280 systems, collection biometrics, the big data systems known as police cloud that identify
281 track monitor people and relationships and set parameters of certain behaviour
282 authorities consider unusual to flag people to monitor. Nowhere else, none of these
283 other systems flag people for detention. The consequences are very different. It seems
284 to me that the intrusion, the collection of biometrics in Xinjiang between the ages 12-

285 65 submits biometrics, including DNA, without consent. I do not think this kind of
286 collection happens elsewhere in China, but if it does it does not to this extent and not
287 to everyone.

288 *PANEL – Following on from that, do you have any information on IJOP, on its sources,*
289 *we know its capacity to integrate, how much is the information from technological*
290 *sources and how much from disclosure from human beings?*

291 MW – It would seem it is a mix as well as humans, primarily police officers and low-
292 level officers in the community office controlled by the party. They collect and insert it
293 in the IJOP system. One of the ways we could understand the IJOP is because we
294 obtained a copy of the police mobile phone app which communicates the IJOP system
295 and we reversed engineered it to understand how it works. It demands large amount
296 of human input.

297 *PANEL – Can you tell from the information you have who has access to it? Obviously*
298 *local police, in theory would the access go right up to CCP in Beijing?*

299 MW – What we do know is that there are permission levels, so a low official would not
300 have every data point. How that permission level is organised is unclear. This large
301 volume of data in Xinjiang ranging from police reports on GPS movements in real time,
302 is being collated in some ways generating large database(s), there is an IJOP office
303 which is situated in police departments. Presumably some level of summarising would
304 have to be done to make it useful – what level that happens on is unclear. We can
305 definitely analyse just how much higher up it is known. The authorities are aware of
306 this and how many are detained, and the political education camps have no legal
307 basis.

308 *PANEL – I will ask a similar question in relation to access of Aksu list, and access to*
309 *this information – who the detainees are and their alleged offences? Do you know who*
310 *has access to that list?*

311 MW – As I said I could imagine the particular camp authorities have it, and the IJOP
312 office as part of Xinjiang police have the information. The list is pooled from the system.
313 The list itself is a permutation of the information available on the database. The police
314 will have it. Beyond that I would not be able to know. But people are categorised
315 according to threat level – this analysis seems available outside Xinjiang. There are
316 Xinjiang offices responsible for monitoring people outside of the Xinjiang region
317 throughout China. I would think the Minister of Public Security would have all the
318 people who are considered security threat in their system.

319 *PANEL – In the evidence we heard on the Qaraqash list, we heard about three circles,*
320 *people's detention on grounds not on what they themselves have done but of what*
321 *others such as friends or family have done. Is there anything in the Aksu list which*
322 *shows approach for reasoning of detention through neighbours, friends and family?*

323 MW – The Aksu list describes people monitored and detained for close relationships.
324 For example, a woman in foreign country, Ms T, her sister was detained as she called.
325 The sister did not even pick up the call because she called and she was abroad, this
326 was the reason for detention.

327 *PANEL – You talked about a report focusing on mass surveillance, in that examination*
328 *of experts was there anything which was parallel to infrastructure, are there other*
329 *infrastructures we could identify of particular organisation such as Huawei?*

330 MW – The IJOP was developed by the CETE, sorry for not remembering the full name.
331 That is in our report. That is a state-owned enterprise. I believe CTC own Hickvision –

332 surveillance companies which are well known for surveillance manufacturing.
333 Hickvision according to another researcher's work is responsible for much of the
334 hardware that is part of the IJOP system. CTC is owned by the state.

335 *PANEL – I wondered you have the list, and found data there, I suspect it won't take*
336 *the PRC long to find out who source was. I want to know having got the list, what are*
337 *HRW going to do about it? What is the next step? And what is the implications of the*
338 *list of relatives of people named on it?*

339 MW – We have not shared the list itself to protect the source. I think the government
340 paradoxically is poor at collecting information and poor at analysing – we continue to
341 keep that document and share it with only select researchers that are cross
342 referencing some of the information. As to the families, there are only some identified
343 immediate family members. Because the information is not given on what happens
344 afterwards to their families, it only provides only a bit of extra information to the family
345 members who have seen the publication of the report. The next stage is really sharing
346 this with select researchers.