

The Powder-Keg of Xinjiang/ East Turkestan: Stop the Cycle of Violence!

Human Rights Report Nr. 72 of the
Society for Threatened Peoples

September 2014


society for
threatened
peoples



Imprint

For human rights. Worldwide.

Society for Threatened Peoples (STP)

Postfach 2024, D-37010 Göttingen

Phone: +49 551 49906-0

Fax: +49 551 58028

E-Mail: info@gfbv.de

Internet: www.gfbv.de

Bank für Sozialwirtschaft

Account number: 70 80 90

Bank code: 25120510

IBAN: DE68 2512 0510 0000 7080 90

BIC: BFS WDE 33HA



The STP is a human rights organization that advocates on behalf of persecuted ethnic and religious minorities; NGO with consultative status at the United Nations and participatory status at the Council of Europe. Offices in Arbil, Bern, Bolzano, Göttingen/Berlin, London, Luxembourg, New York, Pristina, Sarajevo/Srebrenica and Vienna.

Author: Ulrich Delius

Editor: Inse Geismar

Layout: Tanja Wiczorek, Hanno Schedler

Price: 5 Euro

Published by the Society for Threatened Peoples in September 2014

The Powder-Keg of Xinjiang / East Turkestan: Stop the Cycle of Violence!

1. Summary	5
2. Recommendations by the Society for Threatened Peoples	7
3. Escalation of violence in Xinjiang / East Turkestan	8
4. "Holy War" or homemade violence?	8
5. Refugee crisis in Southeast Asia	10
6. Violent incidents - a chronology from June 2014 to March 2013	11
7. Anti-terror fight fuels wave of arrests	25
8. Crimes against the State frequently affect Uyghurs	27
9. Humiliation instead of justice	28
10. China relies on counter-violence and security measures	29
11. Five years after the unrest in Urumqi - the fate of the disappeared is still unclear	30
12. Money and assimilation instead of respect and rights	32
13. No internet freedom for Uyghurs	33
14. Violations of the freedom of religion	34
15. Arrests of Uyghur human rights activists stoke violence	36

1. Summary

In this human rights report, the Society for Threatened Peoples (STP) documents 49 violent incidents between Uyghurs and Han Chinese that took place in the period from March 2013 to June 2014, with at least 354 dead and 515 injured. Furthermore, the report documents the arrest of 745 Uyghurs in Xinjiang/East Turkestan. The alarming figures show that the situation in the conflict region has escalated dramatically in the years 2013/2014. Leading Uyghur human rights activists are systematically silenced: Ilham Tohti, a professor of Economics living in Beijing, was sentenced to life in prison on 23 September 2014. The language rights activist Abduweli Ayup was arrested. Their cases have raised more hopelessness and despair among the Uyghur people and are likely to fuel the cycle of violence. The massive increase of violence is a direct result of the systematic violations of the freedom of religion, freedom of speech, press and the internet of the Uyghurs. China must work towards a political solution to the Uyghur conflict and must not only understand the powder keg Xinjiang/East Turkestan as a mere security problem.

As part of the Chinese security authorities' anti-terrorist struggle, there are ongoing arrests and court proceedings against Uyghur people for "state security crimes". Three out of four people who were put on trial in 2012 in the People's Republic of China for allegedly "endangering state security" are from Xinjiang/East Turkestan. Most of these proceedings are to be seen as violations against the basic rules of Chinese criminal trial law as well as of international standards for fair trials. The recent show-trials, in which the Uyghur defendants are publicly humiliated and are sentenced in front of thousands of spectators in a stadium in the course of a fast process, are especially problematic. These humiliations don't bring justice, they stir up new hatred and violence.

Instead of searching for the causes of violence and starting a fundamental reform of the failed nationality policy, China's authorities see the Uyghur conflict primarily as a security problem. Safety precautions were intensified and even the universities are now involved in the anti-terror struggle. President Xi Jinping repeatedly stressed that the "war against terrorism" must be a key objective for all the activities of the state's bodies. But, as a matter of fact, there are more and more Uyghurs who – in the position of police officers under Chinese order – kill other members of their own population group. This leads to considerable fractures and disputes within the Uyghur society.

Five years after the heavy riots in Urumqi in July 2009, the fate of hundreds of disappeared Uyghurs is still unclear. In this report, we document the fate of many Uyghurs, who – while shopping or on the way to work – randomly got into raids and have

Xinjiang / Ostturkestan: Stop the cycle of violence!

since disappeared. Their fates must be clarified as soon as possible. Further, those who are responsible for their disappearance must be held accountable.

By investing in infrastructure, China's government plans to improve the living conditions of the Uyghurs and to stabilize the situation. Also, more education spending is supposed to promote the Uyghurs' assimilation with the Chinese society. But the Uyghurs don't want to assimilate. They want their rights to be respected: their constitutional rights and their rights guaranteed by the Statute of Autonomy – their culture, their religion and their traditions. Instead, to the detriment of the ethnic minority, the Chinese government promotes the influx of more and more Han Chinese and a change in the population structure by building new railway lines. The lack of respect towards the Uyghurs is one of the basic problems of China's misguided nationality policy in Xinjiang/East Turkestan.

The Uyghurs are not allowed to exchange their views about the situation in their homeland on the Internet or via social media services without running the risk for being sentenced to long prison terms for illegal "spreading rumors or support of terrorism or religious extremism". In the region, there are the most severe restrictions of the freedom of the internet in the whole People's Republic – and none of the other region has so many cases in which webmasters are taken into custody for political reasons.

Most violent incidents are due to violations of the religious freedom of the Muslim Uyghurs. Many of the violent incidents occur because Chinese police officers disrespect the religious clothing regulations of female Uyghurs and lift their veils to determine their identity. New restrictions of the freedom of religion are imposed every week: Banned religious ceremonies, students who are forced to fast-breaking during the fasting month, restaurants that are not allowed to close during Ramadan, bans on veils – and bearded men who become victims of arbitrary identity checks and interrogations.

More and more Uyghurs flee to South East Asia because of the increasing persecution and violence. In spring of 2014, at least 476 members of the minority group sought shelter in Thailand and Malaysia. Due to the increasing persecution, they are in desperate need of refuge in third countries, as their lives would be in imminent danger in case of being deported to China.

The Chinese authorities blame "religious extremists" and the armed group "*East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM)*" for the escalation of violence. But the *ETIM* – which has become almost meaningless – has not taken over responsibility for any of the attacks. The "*Turkestan Islamic Movement (TIM)*" has brought itself into play as a successor organization. The *TIM* is trying to present itself as the voice of the Uyghur people in exile,

but a large majority of Uyghurs want to enforce more respect for human rights only by peaceful means. The Munich-based "*World Uyghur Congress (WUC)*" is indisputably recognized as the most important voice of the Uyghur in exile.

So far, the violence in the conflict region seems to be largely homemade, as a consequence of the anger and despair of the native Uyghur population. Thus, if China's government does not finally try to enter a dialogue with the recognized speakers of the Uyghurs and does not try to find a political solution to the conflict, international jihadists could instrumentalize the conflict for their own purposes even more.

2. Recommendations by the Society for Threatened Peoples

- A. An immediate release of imprisoned human rights activists and political prisoners!
- B. Fair trials according to international standards for all persons involved in cases of violence
- C. A review and re-orientation of the nationality policy in Xinjiang/East Turkestan
- D. Implementation of a true autonomy
- E. Search for a political solution to the Uyghur conflict
- F. No restriction of freedom of religion, of the freedom of expression, the internet and the press
- G. Clarification of the of hundreds of missing persons and punishment of those who are responsible
- H. A limitation of the influx of Han Chinese
- I. Stop the assimilation policy, recognition of the Uyghur history, their culture, traditions and society
- J. Promotion of the Uyghur language and culture
- K. Attempts to further the understanding between the Uyghurs and the Han Chinese

L. Acceptance and protection of Uyghur refugees in third countries

M. No exploitation of resources in Xinjiang/East Turkestan without participation of the local population

3. Escalation of violence in Xinjiang /East Turkestan

The situation in the north-western Chinese autonomous region of Xinjiang/East Turkistan is extremely tense. Since the beginning of 2014, the violence there has increased significantly. Almost every week, there are clashes that claim people's lives. Attacks on railway stations, markets and police stations are answered with massive counter-violence measures and increased persecution by the Chinese security forces. In the present human rights report, we document 49 incidents that occurred since March 2013. At least 354 people were killed in attacks, raids and clashes between Uyghurs and Han Chinese. At least 515 people were injured and 745 people were arrested.

Many suspected human rights violations cannot be followed up due to the state censorship, the restrictive information policy and the restriction of freedom of movement and of the scope for action for human rights organizations in China. Therefore, we assume that the actual number of victims is much higher.

Most of the occurrences listed here are consequences of violations of the freedom of religion. Security forces often cause deadly clashes or Uyghur protests by disrespecting the dress code of the devout Muslims (i.e. lifting the veil of Muslim women to verify their identity) against better judgment or by forcibly breaking up Uyghur prayer meetings. Thus, there were many victims following an attack on a family meeting during which a wedding was to be prepared. Before, the Chinese state media reported that the group was suspected to have built explosive devices.

Larger attacks, such as the car-attack on Tiananmen Square in Beijing or the attacks against travelers at the Kunming railway station, were apparently committed by desperate or hopeless families. They had no radical Islamist background, the acts were due to personal injuries. In conflict situations, the police often react in panic and fire into the crowd indiscriminately. It is to be noted that, in many cases, only one of the Uyghur attackers survives – even if there is a larger groups of attackers. This person is then interrogated and forced to provide information on the perpetrators and their motives. Regularly, the security forces shoot all other violent offenders.

4. "Holy war" or homemade violence?

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the People's Republic of China is trying to convince the international community that China is also part of the global anti-terror fight: namely in Xinjiang/East Turkestan. For years, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the governments of the United States and of many European countries as well as various human rights organizations have expressed their disagreement with this view – as they know that the conflicts in Xinjiang/East Turkestan are mainly home-made, not part of the conflict zones of international jihadism.

Did the escalation of violence in March 2014 change anything about this perception? Chinese authorities continue to blame "religious extremists" for the increasing violence (see *South China Morning Post*; February 17, 2014). After the car-assault on the Tiananmen Square in Beijing in October 2013, China's security authorities immediately accused the *East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM)* for the violence (*South China Morning Post*; November 1, 2013). However, in view of the personal background and the assassins' motives (it was the anniversary of the destruction of a prayer room in a mosque which was co-financed by one of the assassins) there must be serious doubts about this view. It makes no sense to blame *ETIM* in general for all the violence in the conflict region. China's authorities also accuse *ETIM* to have planned an attack on travelers at the station of Urumqi in April 2014 (*South China Morning Post*; May 18, 2014).

The *ETIM* did not claim responsibility for any of the attacks. Much has been written about the *ETIM* and its alleged responsibility for the eruption of violence in the conflict region. Today, however, many observers believe that the movement is in decline and thus has no decisive influence on the development in the conflict region: It is assumed that *ETIM* had more influence in Xinjiang in the late 1990s and around the turn of the millennium. Since the assassination of former leader Hasan Mahsum in his hideout in Waziristan (Pakistan) in October 2003, the group has not been much talked of. It is not even clear whether the *ETIM* carried out a large number of attacks in China – as alleged by China's security agencies – at any time at all (*Wall Street Journal*; May 26, 2014).

The "*Turkistan Islamic Movement (TIM)*", which mainly operates from Pakistan, brings itself into play as the successor organization. Some media have reported that the organization played a role in the attack in Urumqi and declared that it took over responsibility for the act. But, as a matter of fact, the movement had only praised the murder (*Radio Free Asia*; May 15, 2014). Even before, *TIM* had already claimed responsibility for several attacks as an attempt to draw attention – without actually having caused the violence. Since 2005, *TIM* had consolidated and continued to act up.

Leader Abdullah Mansour had tried to position himself as a spokesman for the persecuted Uyghur in the Muslim world. But, so far, the organization's scope for action seems quite limited. However, both the security agencies in China and the *TIM* itself have an interest in ensuring that the organization is talked of: China wants to prove that the country is suffering from the consequences of global terrorism while the *TIM* seeks greater prestige in order to be taken seriously as a voice of the Uyghurs as well.

However, *TIM* has not reached this status yet by a long shot. Its approach is too radical and a large majority of the Uyghurs wants to enforce more respect to human rights by peaceful means only. The Munich-based *World Uyghur Congress* is recognized as the most important voice of the Uyghurs in exile.

However, if the spiral of violence spins even faster, it seems possible that the *TIM* could become more important; due to the fact that the Uyghur populations' hopelessness and hatred increases with every disappearance and with every arbitrary arrest. So far, the violence seems to be largely homemade and to spring from the anger and despair of the native Uyghur population. This assessment is also supported by both the self-made explosive devices and also the knives, with which most acts of violence are committed. This, of course, is not to be understood as an excuse for the perpetrators – who must be held accountable for their bloody deeds in fair judicial processes – but it seems quite clear that, if the government of the People's Republic had the political will to engage in a dialogue, China indeed could contain and stop the violence.

5. Refugee crisis in Southeast Asia

Given the massively increasing persecution in their homeland, more and more Uyghurs are trying to escape to neighboring countries. Since Pakistan and the Central Asian States cooperate closely with the People's Republic of China and thus send refugees back to China, hundreds of Uyghurs have fled to Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia and then on to Thailand and Malaysia in 2013/2014. This is an entirely new phenomenon and an enormous challenge for the host countries, because of China's massive protest if third countries decide to take up refugees – which many states taken very seriously, due to China's political and economic importance. In May 2014, there were 476 new refugees who presumably fled from Xinjiang/East Turkestan to Southeast Asia.

It is particularly striking that many of the refugee women are veiled and that many refugees are devout Muslims, which is to be seen as consequence of the growing repression in their homeland. The refugees can hardly expect any help by the Southeast Asian States, since it typical for these countries that taking up refugees is problematic and

since the relationship with the People's Republic of China is very tense due to the territorial disputes concerning the South China Sea. These states have only limited possibilities to contribute to an improvement of the human rights situation in Xinjiang/East Turkestan or to a political solution to the Uyghur conflict by influencing the Chinese leadership.

If Uyghur refugees are deported back to China, this is equivalent to a death sentences. China's authorities leave no stone unturned to get hold of the refugees and to punish them in draconic ways as a deterrent.

6. Violent incidents – a chronology from June 2014 to March 2013

Since March 2013, there were 49 violent clashes between Uyghurs and security forces, attacks on police stations and police raids. 354 people were killed, 515 people were injured and at least 745 people were arrested.

June 21, 2014: According to official Chinese figures, 13 people were killed when they attacked a police department in Kargilik (Chinese: Yecheng) in the district of Kashgar. Reportedly, three police officers were slightly injured in the attack (*Associated Press / South China Morning Post*; June 21, 2014). According to information by the authorities, the attackers had driven a van loaded with explosives into building and caused a detonation. All attackers were shot by police, the authorities stated – but no further information concerning the culprits or the circumstances of the events were disclosed. As journalist are not allowed to access the region, this little information could not be verified in an independent investigation.

June 20, 2014: On Thursday night, five police officers were killed in an attack on a security checkpoint in the village Kayash (district Qaraqash / Chinese: Moyu) in the prefecture of Hotan. Two police officers were stabbed and died of their injuries on the way to hospital. Three more officers – who were resting in a side room of the building – died in the blaze after the attackers had set fire to the premises (*Radio Free Asia*; June 22, 2014). The security checkpoint was completely destroyed in the attack. The police found five empty gas cans near the crime scene. Village residents reported that the police had arbitrarily arrested and interrogated veiled women and bearded men in the days before the attack. A teacher who lives in the district, who wished to remain anonymous, thought that the attack did not come as a surprise. "I wasn't surprised when I heard about the incident," the teacher said. "The current 'strike-hard-campaign' might even lead to more serious incidents than the ones that we are currently experiencing; not to mention the

various campaigns in previous years... They do nothing to ensure stability but only stir up enmity and hatred in society", (*Radio Free Asia*; June 22, 2014).

June 20, 2014: A police officer was stabbed and killed – and a second officer was injured at the police station in the city of Ishkul in the district of Yarkand (Chinese: Shache) in the prefecture of Kashgar. A Uyghur man, who had been summoned for questioning for the second time in one week, is the suspect. He was tortured during the first interrogation, but did not offer any incriminating evidence for any offense or felony. Obviously, the alleged perpetrator was now afraid of being tortured again. His fate remains unknown up to the present day.

June 15, 2014: Three Uyghur men assault a group of mahjong players with axes in a chess and mahjong hall in the city of Hotan (*Washington Post*; June 15, 2014). Video cameras filmed them drawing their axes and hurting four players (*South China Morning Post*; June 17, 2014). The visitors of the arcade threw chairs after the attackers to fend off further attacks. Then, the attackers follow the fleeing mahjong players into a parking lot, where they are surrounded by local residents from neighboring shops, who had been called for help and who are armed with clubs and rods. Finally, heavily armed police forces arrive. Two of the attackers are killed; a third is wounded and arrested. The video camera recordings are not clear enough to determine whether the attackers were killed by the sent-for police or the passers-by. When interviewed by *CCTV*, the stately TV station, one of the persons who were wounded in the attack says: "For me, they are not people. They cause trouble for themselves as well as for others – and they cause chaos in our society." (*South China Morning Post*; June 16, 2014)

The Uyghur Muer Zahti, one of the surviving assassin of June 15, was showed up on *CCTV* state television on June 22, 2014 (*Associated Press*; June 22, 2014). It is common practice of the Chinese law enforcement authorities to urge detainees to confess their guilt via stately media even before the formal legal proceedings take place. Thus, several detained human rights defenders had to confess their guilt in nationally broadcasted interviews in April and May 2014. Such television appearances prior to the formal criminal proceedings are to be seen as violations of the Chinese Criminal Trial Laws. In the TV-broadcast, the 19-year-old imprisoned Uyghur apologized for his attack and blamed his accomplices: They had incited him and had promised him, that – following a suicide attack in the context of a "Holy War" – he would go to heaven and be close to Allah (*Al Djazeera*; June 22, 2014). The police claimed that the assassins were inspired by extremist religious videos from abroad.

June 4, 2014: The four Uyghurs Dawut Zunun, Turaji Obulqasim, Tursunjan Hoseyin and his older brother were shot by police forces in the village Salayqong in the district Konasheher (Chinese: Shufu) in the prefecture of Kashgar. The Uyghurs had previously killed an Uyghur policeman who had lifted the veil of an Uyghur in the course of a house search. Two Uyghur men died on the spot in the hail of police bullets. A third was seriously injured and died on his way to a hospital. A fourth person was shot in the back, fatally, when fleeing from the policemen (*Radio Free Asia*; June 11, 2014).

May 29, 2014: An Uyghur pillion passenger of a motor cyclist is shot by a police patrol in the village Besheriq (district of Awat, prefecture of Aksu). The authorities claimed that both persons were sought after for "crimes against the stability of society" (*Radio Free Asia*; June 11, 2014). The fact that the two Uyghur men were in possession of gas cans was interpreted as evidence for them planning an attack.

May 29, 2014: Four people were killed in two incidents in the district of Toksu (Chinese: Xinhe) in the prefecture of Aksu. In the village Karatagh, two Uyghur men and one police officer got killed when security forces tried to arrest several members of the minority group. The policeman was beaten to death when he and a squad of eight law enforcement officers searched a house looking for two suspected bombers. According to the authorities, they had been attacked with knives and sticks inside the house and had then opened fire. The 35-year-old Imin Tomur and his 37-year-old brother Rahman Tomur – both sought after by the police – were killed (*Radio Free Asia*; June 5, 2014). The head of the police operation explained that Rahman Tomur did not have anything to do with the bomb-building, but had been shot because he had been an accomplice of the main suspect. His 35-year-old friend Yasin Osman was wounded by police. Four policemen were wounded in the operation.

In the other incident, a police officer killed an Uyghur man following a dispute. The man had complained about police officers who had forced his wife to lift her veil and show her face (*Radio Free Asia*; June 5, 2014). The incident occurred when a group of policemen searched a house.

May 28, 2014: During the night, police officers shot two adolescent Uyghurs in the city of Kashgar. Eyewitnesses reported that the victims were probably about 17 or 18 years old, the authorities stated them both to be 18. Chinese merchants had called the police. The police stated that the adolescents had attacked two Han Chinese with knives; the police had then surrounded them both and opened fire on them. It is said that one of the alleged perpetrators died at the scene; the other had succumbed to his injuries in the hospital (*Radio Free Asia*; May 28, 2014).

May 25, 2014: A bomb exploded in front of a police station in Yarkand (Chinese: Shache). Four other bombs were defused before they could explode. Three of the explosive devices had been placed in front of police stations; another one was located near a gas station in a neighborhood inhabited mainly by Han Chinese (*Radio Free Asia*; May 26, 2014). After the attack-plans became known to the public, many Han Chinese of the neighborhood were deeply worried and frightened, as eyewitnesses reported. The explosion left one police vehicle damaged. The police refused to disclose any further details concerning the attacks.

May 21, 2014: 43 dead and 94 wounded persons – the sad figures of an attack with two vehicles on a market in the city of Urumqi (*South China Morning Post*; May 24, 2014). At high speed, two off-road vehicles drove into groups of people who had gathered around the market stalls. One of the vehicles exploded after the collision. Most of the victims were elderly people who had hoped for inexpensive shopping opportunities. The attack is to be seen as one of the worst acts of violence in north-western China since many years. China described the incident as an "act of terrorist violence". According to the authorities, the assassins blew up one of the vehicles during the crash on purpose (*BBC*; May 23, 2014). In all the cities of the region, the security arrangements were then significantly increased. After the analysis of surveillance camera material, the authorities issued search warrants for the Uyghurs Kurban Kadim and Abulaiti Niyam (*Radio Free Asia*; May 23, 2014). The security authorities assume that there were five perpetrators; four of them were killed in the attack, a fifth suspect was arrested two days after the attack, 250 kilometers to the south of Urumqi (*South China Morning Post*; May 24, 2014).

May 13, 2014: Two Uyghurs were shot in the village of Sanju; and another was arrested under the suspicion of being involved in a bomb attack on a police department. An eyewitness reported that one of the victims had been shot dead on an asparagus farm, although the young man was unarmed, fleeing from a burning field. A farmer who reported on the incident stated that the farmers had not wanted to help the security forces in carrying out the raids, but had feared to be seen as "sympathizers" of the terrorists and therefore taken part in the chase (*Radio Free Asia*; May 17, 2014). According to eyewitnesses, the sought-after person could have been arrested alive. "When the field was on fire, we waited for him for over an hour," said the chief police officer. "He simply had to come out of the field. When he did, we shot him." The police shot the second suspect because he had been holding a knife in his hand. The defendants were accused of being involved in a nightly bomb attack against a police station in the district of Guma (Chinese: Pishan) in the prefecture of Guma.

May 8, 2014: When a group of passengers of an overland bus was searched in the city of Aksu, policemen shot a Uyghur boy and arrested an adult. Eyewitnesses reported that the security forces had opened fire on the adolescent immediately. Previously, he had apparently also been insulted by the police (*Reuters*; May 08, 2014). Thereupon, another adolescent had attacked a police officer with a knife and wounded him with a stab in the arm (*South China Morning Post*; May 8, 2014). It is reported that at least two police vehicles had gone up in flames during the dispute.

May 6, 2014: Six people were injured in a knife attack that took place at the railway station of Gungzhou in southeastern China. The attacker himself was wounded too. The authorities did nothing to clarify his identity. They only published a statement saying that he had carried out the attack on his own (*Guardian*; May 07, 2014). This was the third assault on train travelers in China within two months (*South China Morning Post*; May 6, 2014). The authorities emphasized that they were doing everything possible to keep the citizens safe. Thus, more than 4,000 armed police and 10,000 auxiliary policemen were employed to patrol the city from May 1, 2014 onwards. Furthermore, 397,000 surveillance cameras have been installed in the city since then. In Shanghai and Beijing, the security measures were tightened dramatically.

May 1, 2014: The dead body of the 16-year-old Uyghur student Ibrahim Abdurahman was found in a river in the city of Jiaxing in the eastern Chinese province of Zhejiang. The adolescent had gone missing a few days earlier. While the police stated that he had committed suicide, family members suspect an act of violence, as his head and his back showed doubtful injuries. They fear that his death could have been a violent act of retaliation related to the bloody attack on travelers in the Kunming railway station.

April 30, 2014: During the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping in the northwest of the country, three people were killed and another 79 people are injured in an attack on travelers who were waiting in front of the Urumqi railway station (*South China Morning Post*; April 30, 2014). Xi Jinping was on a four-day tour through the autonomous region; immediately after the attack, he called for harsher measures against the extremists. Xi called on the Muslims to "clearly distance themselves from extremism" (*Daily Telegraph*; April 30, 2014). In addition, the President demanded "to further promote and support the ethnic minorities".

In a speech in Urumqi, just a few hours before the attack, Xi Jinping stated: "The long-term stability of Xinjiang is vital to the whole country's reform, development and stability; to the country's unity, ethnic harmony and national security as well as to the great revival of the Chinese nation." (*Daily Telegraph*; April 30, 2014).

The security authorities believe that the attack was planned and carried out by two persons, who both then had died in the bloody deed. One of the culprits was the 39-year-old Sedirdin Sawut from Aksu (*South China Morning Post*; May 1, 2014). The police were instructed to arrest ten family members of Sedirdin. The wanted persons were his 69-year-old father, the 77-year-old father-in-law, his wife as well as his brothers and cousins – aged 22 to 77 (*South China Morning Post*; May 3, 2014). More than 100 family members of the alleged assassin were arrested in his home town Gulbagh in the district of Shayar (*Radio Free Asia*; May 9, 2014). Observers had judged the attack during Xi Jinping's visit to be a failure of the local and national safety authorities.

April 12, 2014: The 17-year-old Uyghur high school student Abdulbasit Ablimit, who had allegedly ran over a red light on his motorcycle, was killed by a police patrol with a shot in the back (*Uyghur American Association*; April 14, 2014). Two other Uyghurs who accompanied Ablimit were injured by bullets. Subsequently, more than 400 relatives and friends of the deceased took to the streets in a peaceful protest; carrying the dead body from the village Qum'eriq near the town of Yurchi to the district authorities. The protesters demanded the background of the death to be clarified and the responsible police officers to be punished. The protest march was violently broken up by the security forces; they had beaten up the Uyghur people and arrested 15 members of the minority. Also, Ablimit's Uncle Mahmut Hesamidin was taken into custody. Immediately, the authorities ordered an information blackout and imposed a state of emergency on the region. Also, three eyewitnesses of the shooting of Ablimit disappeared in the course of the arrests, (*Radio Free Asia*; April 29, 2014).

March 2014: After an assault on travelers at the railway station of Kunming in the province of Yunnan, about 900 Uyghurs were forcibly deported to their native homeland Xinjiang (*Ming Pao*; March 12, 2014). The Uyghurs – some of whom had been living in Yunnan as traders, street vendors, restaurant owners and workers for years – only receive a small amount of money to cover the costs of about 163 US-dollars. Similar deportations also took place in Beijing and in the provinces of Shaanxi and Henen (*Radio Free Asia*; March 12, 2014).

March 23, 2014: In the city of Atush, the 21-year-old Uyghur Njiant Semet was seriously injured by police officers. The clerk of the local city administration ended up in a conflict with two policemen, who confiscated the key of his moped. Finally, he was handcuffed and taken away by eight police officers of a special police force. Shortly after, he was seen bleeding from nose and mouth. Four hours later, the hospital informed his father that the son was in a critical condition. However, the young man survived the abuse and the excessive violence by the police (*Radio Free Asia*; March 27, 2014). Nevertheless, attacks

like this confirm the Uyghur people's impression of arbitrary, ethnically motivated violence and lawlessness.

March 16, 2014: The 29-year-old Uyghur policeman Osmanjan Ghoji is stabbed and killed by the Uyghur Ilyar Rehmütulla in the city of Urumqi (*Radio Free Asia*; March 18, 2014). The attacker is immediately shot dead by some of the victim's colleagues.

March 11, 2014: Six people got killed in the course of a dispute between the Uyghur market traders Memet Abla and Hebir Turdi in the central Chinese city of Changsha. First, Turdi stabbed Abla to death, then he arbitrarily killed another four passers-by. Finally, the attacker was shot by police (*Radio Free Asia*; March 14, 2014).

March 1, 2014: In the city of Kunming in the province of Yunnan, an assault was committed on a group of passengers at the railway station. 33 passengers and four suspected assassins were killed in the bloodbath; another 143 people were injured. The massacre triggered worldwide outrage and was also condemned by Uyghur organizations in exile. One woman of the attackers is said to have survived the attack and to have been interrogated by the police. The other woman involved in the raid died, but her identity was not disclosed by the authorities. According to official information, six men and two women were involved in the preparation and in carrying out the attack. The security authorities stated to have identified Abdurehim Kurban as the leader of the group. His wife was said to have been among the attackers. The attackers arbitrarily stabbed travelers who bought tickets in the bustling railway station. Apparently, all perpetrators were dressed in black.

Even four months after the assassination, many questions were still unanswered. Thus, it is still unclear how the perpetrators were able to enter the well-guarded station with their knives at hand. In addition, it is unclear why the special police forces took so long to arrive at the scene and to stop the killing. Whether the perpetrators – as claimed by the authorities – had an Islamist background or not is questionable, since they were masked during the attack. Usually, Islamist assassins who see themselves as being part of the holy war don't wear masks. On the contrary: as they feel that their crimes will take them close to Allah, most of them make sure that their identity is known.

On the part of the security authorities, there is a lack of transparency concerning both the reconstruction of the crime as well as the background research of the alleged assassins. On March 11, the Chinese magazine *Caixin* reported that three persons who were detained for taking part in preparing the assassination had already been taken into custody on February 27 – two days before the bloodbath. However, the authorities have

no interest in an extensive coverage of the attack. Thus, the article was blocked and taken from the magazine's website shortly after. Obviously, the authorities feared that the relatives of the victims might have a lot of questions about the circumstances of the crime and the failed security measures. In the case of the Kunming-assault – unlike in the case of the families of the victims of the Malaysia Airlines disaster – the authorities did everything possible to prevent the families of the victims from coordinating their activities and thus be able to publicly present themselves in unity. Therefore, the relatives of the dead were accommodated in different hotels and quickly taken away from Kunming again, in order to keep them from making contacts among each other (*South China Morning Post*; April 21, 2014).

Thus, the perpetrators' true motives are still unknown. The authorities' report concerning the discovery of a Uyghur flag is not especially informative, since the Uyghur people honor it and since there are millions of these flags to be found in the country and also abroad. For an act of violence in the name of "political or religious extremism," it is at least unusual that a couple is said to have been involved in a leading position.

Nevertheless, the leader of the Communist Party in Yunnan, Qin Guangrong, is convinced that the perpetrators were "religious extremists". Allegedly, the assassins had come to Yunnan and the province of Guangdong (near Hong Kong) to flee abroad. There, they are supposed to have planned to contact other religious extremists to go to "holy war". In an interview with *Radio China International*, a party official stated that the escape to Hong Kong, Vietnam and on to Laos had not succeeded – which is why they had decided to return to Yunnan and carry out an attack on a transportation center there. Shortly after, the interesting interview was deleted from the website (*South China Morning Post*; March 5, 2014). The party official's statements are of some interest – and may have been right with his conclusion that the attackers had been Uyghur refugees. Since they did not succeed in escaping abroad, they probably committed the terrible as an act of desperation and hopelessness. Many bloody incidents in the region during the past months are based on similar scenarios.

February 14, 2014: Eleven Uyghur people were killed in an incident in the district of Uchturpan (Chinese: Wushi) in the prefecture of Aksu. Eight of them had been shot dead in an alleged attack on a police patrol, according to the authorities. Also, three other men got killed as they had used canisters with liquid gas as explosives. There were no independent investigations of the crime. The authorities imposed an information ban and a curfew in the entire region. The hospitals were put on alert, but not informed about the background of the alarm. The *World Uyghur Congress* expressed its deep concern about the increase in violence and the non-transparent information policy of the Chinese

authorities. The organization strongly demanded more information about the circumstances of the crime and about the background of the violence.

January 29, 2014: Police officers killed Qurban Tursun in a raid in the village of Dolan (district of Karatal; city of Aksu). The police later stated that the father of two children had refused to open his door. As the police chief of Karatal reported, Tursun had told the police to come back the next day because his children were deeply frightened due to the fact that the incident occurred at night (*Radio Free Asia*; February 03, 2014). Tursun had already been detained for allegedly harboring a Uyghur who was wanted by the authorities. According to the police, his house was searched on a weekly basis after his release.

January 24, 2014: Twelve people die in the province of Aksu. After bombings were perpetrated on a grocery store and a beauty salon in the district of Xinhe in the prefecture of Aksu, six Uyghur are shot by the police. Six other people had blown their vehicle as it was surrounded by security forces, police said. Five more suspects had been arrested (*Global Times*; January 26, 2014/*Guardian*; January 25, 2014).

January 23, 2014: Twelve people were killed by a border patrol on Kyrgyz territory about 40 kilometers off the Chinese border. It is said that the victims were eleven Uyghurs and one Kyrgyz. Primarily, the Kyrgyz Ranger Alexander Barykin was the first to spot the group of the eleven backpackers. They were obviously on their way north; but unable to communicate either in Kyrgyz or in Russian, when Barykin asked to see their identity papers. Barykin alerted a border post, which then sent out command squad. The group of backpackers was surrounded – and all of them were dead shortly after (*World Uyghur Congress*; February 2, 2014). Even weeks after the incident, the Kyrgyz authorities were still not prepared to provide further information about the crime or about the backgrounds of the victims.

January 22, 2014: The Uyghur Secretary of the Communist Party, Jume Tohtiniyaz, was murdered in the village of Ghaldir (near the city of Aksu, Karatal district). The authorities blamed "separatists" for his death. The secretary was known for his pro-Chinese opinions and his strict views concerning the implementation of the state policy on religion. Two suspects were arrested (*Radio Free Asia*; February 3, 2014).

December 30, 2013: Eight Uyghurs were killed by security forces in the district of Yarkand (Chinese: Shache) in the prefecture of Kashgar. While the police claimed that the members of the minority group had been seized and then killed when they tried to attack a police station with knives and bombs, other sources claim that the persons had been

shot dead during a demonstration (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*; December 31, 2013 / *South China Morning Post*; December 31, 2013 / *Radio Free Asia*; December 30, 2013). The authorities did not comment on the identity of those killed. However, it became known that – among others – the two Uyghurs Osman Barat and Abdughani Abdukadir were among the victims. Following the incident, security checkpoints were set up in order to thoroughly check on passing vehicles throughout the region. In many cities there were public protests by the local Uyghur population against arbitrary raids and house searches by Chinese security forces in villages and neighborhoods mainly inhabited by Uyghurs.

December 15, 2013: At least 16 people were killed in a raid and house-search in the village of Saybagh (district of Konasheher, Chinese: Shufu; prefecture of Kashgar). A group of believers met in the house to pray. The authorities regarded this to be an illegal assembly and decided to check on the peoples' identities. As protest arose, the police shot and killed the resisting Uyghurs. There were also two policemen among the dead. They had died in an initial scuffle (*Global Times*; December 17, 2013). Six women and two adolescents were also killed in the bloodbath. Official media had called the victims "rioters" or "violent terrorist perpetrators" who had planned violent acts (*The Voice of Russia*; December 16, 2013 / *tianshannet.com*; December 16, 2013 / *Al Djazeera*; December 16, 2013). Chinese media reported that the ones who were shot had belonged to a gang of 20 separatists (*South China Morning Post*; December 17, 2013). As a matter of fact, however, the meeting was held to prepare a wedding. The violence was triggered by the head of the police squad, Memet Sidiq, who had raised the veil of one of the female inhabitants against her will in order to verify her identity. In the following, the four brothers living in the house had attacked the police officer – and the task force had opened fire on the Uyghurs (*Radio Free Asia*; December 18, 2013).

November 16, 2013: According to the Chinese authorities, eleven people were killed in an alleged attack on a police station in Siriqbuya (Chinese: Selibuya) in the district of Maralbeshi (Chinese: Bachu) in the prefecture of Kashgar (*Al Djazeera*; November 17, 2013). Reportedly, two auxiliary policemen and nine attackers had died in the attack. The attackers had wanted to free two detainees. The two men had been taken into custody in the neighboring town of Alaghir a few hours earlier. According to the police, they were "accomplices" of the attackers (*Radio Free Asia*; November 19, 2013).

Yet, there were three eyewitnesses who contradicted the official version. They pointed out that the situation in the village had already been very tense for months. In April 2013, there had been another serious incident in which at least 21 people had been killed. A reporter of the *BBC*, who later conducted some research in the region, also

contradicts the official version of a "terrorist attack" on the policemen. Villagers stated that the violence had been caused by a targeted intimidation of a local family. Because of his research, the foreign journalist was banned from the site by the police. Eyewitnesses reported that – because of the ongoing tensions and frequent raids, house searches and arbitrary police action – several young villagers had finally protested against the harsh security measures in front of the City Hall on 16 November 2013. When facing the protesters, the police had panicked and shot into the crowd arbitrarily. Subsequently, a group of Uyghurs had then killed two of the policemen. The remaining police forces retreated into the building and called for reinforcement. The special commando unit that rushed to the scene had then killed several other Uyghurs, who had tried to hide inside the police department (*Uyghur Human Rights Project*; November 20, 2013).

October 28, 2013: An off-road vehicle with three passengers intentionally drove into a crowd on the Tiananmen Square in Beijing. Five people were killed – including the three passengers – and 38 people were injured. The bloody deed even reached global media coverage, as it was the first time that such an act of violence took place in the capital. After the attack, the security authorities issued search warrants for eight people, among them 21-year-old Liu Ke, who was born in Sichuan (*South China Morning Post*; October 30, 2013) and now lives in Xinjiang/East Turkestan. All other suspects had Uyghur names. Four of the wanted persons were women. The Chinese authorities stated that the incident had been a "terrorist attack by religious extremists" who had allegedly enjoyed foreign support. However, there are indications that the attack had other causes and backgrounds; because the three main perpetrators driving the vehicle – which was destroyed completely – were the 33-year-old Usmen Hesen, his wife and his mother. In his home village Yengi Aymaq, many people are convinced that the bloody deed was a personally motivated act of revenge: Usmen had made a donation to finance a prayer room in a mosque – which had to be torn down again by order of the authorities. Apparently, the extension of the mosque had not been approved by the authorities (*Radio Free Asia*; November 06, 2013). Ever since, Usmen had been angry about the Chinese authorities and had accused them of arbitrariness. Also, the incident took place exactly one year after the prayer room had been torn down – under protection of 100 police officers – on October 28, 2012.

However, China's security authorities once again blamed the radical Islamic Uyghur movement *East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM)* of being responsible for the violence. They had found a banderole with extremist religious slogans with the perpetrators, security-authorities claim. However, the police cannot explain how the banderole could possibly have withstood the attack unscathed in a completely burned vehicle.

Xinjiang / Ostturkestan: Stop the cycle of violence!

Again and again, there are similar inconsistencies in China's information policy concerning the escalating violence in Xinjiang/East Turkestan. Instead of following a transparent information policy, China's security authorities only provide very few details on the matter. Often, the information that is finally published does not appear to be credible; rather, there seems to be a "scripted" typecast of this sort of incident. Thus, despite the lack of evidence, the authorities are desperately trying to blame the terrorist movement *ETIM* of being the mastermind behind the violence. The constant reports of alleged Uyghur "attacks" against police stations seem less credible, since these incidents are mostly only demonstrations to enforce a release of imprisoned relatives or friends.

Due to allegedly supporting the attack in Beijing on June 16, 2014, three defendants were sentenced to death, one person received a life sentence and four people will have to serve prison sentences between five and twenty years (*BBC, South China Morning Post*; June 16, 2014).

As a consequence of the attack, the military commander of Xinjiang, Peng Yong, lost his position as a member of the Standing Committee of the Communist Party of Xinjiang on November 3, 2013. He was therefore de facto deprived of his power and had to face being replaced (*Le Monde*; November 3, 2013).

Within only six days after the incident in the capital, 53 Uyghurs were arrested in Xinjiang/East Turkestan and 93 members of the minority group were detained in Beijing (*South China Morning Post*; November 3, 2013 / *Radio Free Asia*; November 4, 2013). Many Uyghurs suffer from being discriminated against, since the Han Chinese tend to put them under the general suspicion of being "terrorists". Thus, many Chinese restaurant owners deny Uyghurs access to their premises for fear of the reaction of the Chinese guests.

October 2013: About 100 Uyghurs were arrested in the course of a campaign against Uyghur refugees in the province of Yunnan. At least 30 Uyghur were imprisoned in the border town of Mohan (district of Mengla) at the end of September. They were suspected of trying to flee from the People's Republic.

October 11, 2013: Between September 25 and October 11, at least eleven Uyghurs got killed in the course of five police deployments in the district of Yarkand (Chinese: Shache) in the prefecture of Kashgar. The first operation took place near Odanliq on September 25. Thereby, at least five Uyghurs were killed and two people were arrested. According to the authorities, the arrested had admitted that – together with a group of 20 other people – they had planned attacks with up to a hundred bombs to be carried out on the

national holiday, October 1. Subsequently, a state of emergency is imposed on the entire district. Another operation took place in Odanliq on September 30. There is no further information concerning the two police operations in Tomosteng, during which five people were killed. One person died in an operation in Yingwusitang on October 11 (*Radio Free Asia*; October 24, 2013). The suspects who got killed in the police operations had been either sleeping or in prayer, eyewitnesses reported later. Another witness stated that the police operation was carried out with the order that all involved suspects should be immediately liquidated – except for one or two who should be interrogated later. Of course, it would have been possible to capture all the suspects alive, the police source claimed. Reportedly, a police officer was mistakenly shot and wounded by his colleagues in an operation.

October 3, 2013: Four Uyghurs were killed in the village of Abu Dona No. 16 in the district of Yarkand (Chinese: Shache) in the prefecture of Kashgar, when the security forces surround a house and open fire on the people inside. Four Uyghurs die in the police's hail of bullets. The Uyghurs were accused of an "illegal gathering" (*Radio Free Asia*; October 7, 2013).

October 1, 2013: Nine Uyghurs – six men and three women – were arrested for planning a demonstration in front of an official building in Yarkand on occasion of the Chinese national holiday – as a form of protest against arbitrary executions of local members of the minority group.

September 28, 2013: A Uyghur man was shot by police officers at the railway station of Yarkand in the prefecture of Kashgar. The security measures in the region were intensified significantly and new checkpoints were established. The Uyghur population must now fear to be monitored constantly.

September 26, 2013: Two Uyghurs were killed in the village of Abu Dona No. 29 in the district of Yarkand (Chinese: Shache) in the prefecture of Kashgar.

August 23, 2013: At least twelve men died when police forces made a charge on a group of 35 Uyghurs in the village Jigdejay in the district of Poskam (Chinese: Zepu), Kashgar prefecture. Another 20 people were injured. The Chinese authorities claimed to have stormed a "training camp for terrorists". There is no independent confirmation for this statement. There was no report in the incident in the Chinese media (*New York Times*; September 18, 2013).

August 20, 2013: In Yilkiqi village (district of Kargilik, Chinese: Yecheng) in the prefecture of Kashgar, 22 Uyghur and a Chinese police officer were killed in an anti-terror operation of the Chinese police. The farm workers had in a private house for prayers. In search of alleged "terrorists", the house was surrounded by policemen and then stormed; almost all the farm workers in the house were shot. Only four Uyghurs survived the attack. They were arrested (*Uyghur American Association*; August 28, 2013 / *Agence France Presse*; August 27, 2013). Again and again, policemen commit assaults on praying Muslims. Deeply unsettled by the increasingly restrictive rules governing the practice of religion, many Muslim Uyghurs avoid visiting mosques and prefer to meet in private homes for prayer or religious festivals. In the eyes of the Chinese security authorities, this behavior is suspicious; if a group of Uyghurs meets up, they are very frequently treated as "religious extremists" or "terrorists".

August 14, 2013: The 74-year-old Uyghur Imam Abdurehim Damaolla was stabbed to death in the city of Turpan in the Turpan Prefecture. Prior, the Uyghur population had accused the Imam of publicly incriminated Uyghurs as "terrorists" and of approving of the official "strike-hard-campaign".

August 7, 2013: In the city of Akyol (Aksu prefecture), the police opened fire on a crowd of people who – near the end of the fasting month of Ramadan – protested against the restrictions of freedom of religion and in particular against the requirements concerning the conduct of prayers. At least three Uyghur were killed and 50 people were injured. About 350 Uyghur residents of the city were arrested because of the protests.

August 3, 2013: The Uyghur teacher Perhat Mollahun died unexpectedly after 16 years imprisonment in Chinese custody. He had been arrested in 1998 and sentenced to death in January 1999. Later, his sentence was changed to a life imprisonment.

June 30, 2013: In the city of Atush in the Kizilsu Kyrgyz Autonomous Prefecture, an Uyghur and a policeman died in a dispute following a house search.

June 28, 2013: Two Uyghur motorcyclists were shot by Police officers near Hotan. They were on their way back from noon prayers at the mosque, when the police panicked and opened fire – because the motorcyclists had shouted religious slogans.

May 20, 2013: Seven Chinese workers were killed in a knife attack at a dam construction site on Qaraqash River in the district of Qaraqash (Chinese: Moyu) in Hotan Prefecture (Chinese: Hetian). Subsequently, around 300 Uyghurs were arrested and interrogated;

several dozen of them were kept imprisoned as suspects for months (*Radio Free Asia*; July 29, 2013).

June 26, 2013: In the city of Lukchun in the district of Pichan (Chinese: Shanshan) in Turpan Prefecture, policemen fired into a crowd that had gathered outside a police station to protest against human rights violations. 46 people died in the massacre, including two policemen. The Chinese authorities published a different version of the occurrences: a knife-wielding mob had attacked the police station.

June 2013: In the city of Hanerik in Hotan Prefecture, 15 Uyghurs were killed and 50 people injured when police officers opened fire on a crowd protesting against the closure of a mosque and against the arrest of a young religious leader.

May 23, 2013: At the bazaar of the city Kargilik (Chinese: Yecheng) in Kashgar Prefecture, three Uyghurs and two Han Chinese died in a dispute between the two population groups.

April 25, 2013: In the village of Yengi Awat (Chinese: Yingawa) in the district of Hotan in Hotan Prefecture, two members of the security forces were killed in a dispute between Uyghurs and Han Chinese that arose from the massive police deployment to the region. The authorities decided not to publish any information about the incident.

April 23, 2013: In Siriqbuya (Chinese: Selibuya) in the district of Maralbeshi (Chinese: Bachu) in the prefecture of Kashgar, 21 people were killed in a dispute following a house search. Among the victims were 16 Uyghur, three Han Chinese and two Mongols. After the incident, another 19 Uyghur were taken into custody as suspects. To this day, the authorities failed to provide a conclusive explanation of the course of events; instead, they altered the official version of the events several times. According to official statements, 15 social workers and police officers had been among the dead as well. The aim of the house search was to confiscate knives. According to a police statement, the house search had culminated in the break-up of a "terrorist group" founded by the Uyghur Kasmu Memet in September 2012. Apparently, the group – its name was not mentioned – had held illegal prayer hours; and sold swords and explosives from March 2013 onwards. Also, the group was said to have planned attacks on a larger scale. Initially, the authorities had also mentioned international support for the group, but this charge was dropped.

March 21, 2013: The seven-year-old Uyghur boy Enkerjan Ariz from the village of Dighar in the district of Pichan (Chinese: Shanshan), Turpan Prefecture, was attacked and killed

by a Han Chinese while playing with friends; the man had thought the boy to be a thief. The two friends were able to escape, but the 52-year-old man caught Enkerjan and brutally murdered him in his house (*Radio Free Asia*; April 9, 2013). The police arrested the suspect. The child's violent death led to an outrage in his home village – 150 family members of the boy even tried to set fire to houses of Han Chinese as an act of revenge. In the incident, several windows were shattered and security forces arrested ten of the enraged protesters. However, they were released when the situation had calmed down. The Chinese media did not cover this conflict.

March 9, 2013: In Gujiang Bage, Hotan Prefecture, a gas station was attacked by unknown people. The attackers had previously scattered nails outside the police station to stop the police from following them in vehicles (*Centre for Human Rights and Democracy*; Hong Kong; March 12, 2013).

March 7, 2013: At least four people died and 13 people were injured in a dispute between Han Chinese and Uyghurs in a gambling hall in the city of Korla. Following the incident, there had been tensions between members of the different ethnic groups in the city, after the authorities had conducted several raids and house searches in Uyghur neighborhoods. After the bloody dispute, parts of the city were cut off from public transport and the security measures were tightened significantly. Thus, security forces patrolled the streets, checking the identity papers of passers-by. In addition, a night curfew was imposed in Korla. Thousands of new security forces were deployed to the region. One of the alleged perpetrators had been arrested, the police stated – but did not provide any details about his identity (*Agence France Presse*; March 11, 2013).

7. Anti-terror fight fuels wave of arrests

In spring of 2014, China reacted to the increasing violence in Xinjiang/East Turkestan with an anti-terrorist campaign, which is to be carried out over the course of a year. However, one month after the start of the national campaign – with a focus on the autonomous Uyghur region of Xinjiang – the authorities declared on June 23, 2014 that they had arrested more than 380 suspects and had managed to disband 32 "terrorist gangs" during the first month (*CCTV*; June 23, 2014). Furthermore, they stated to have seized 264 explosive devices with an explosive yield of 3.15 tons. Reportedly, the courts in Xinjiang had convicted 315 people for supporting or propagation "religious extremism", for assembling weapons and explosive devices, for spreading "terrorist propaganda", and for illegal flight from the republic (*People's Daily*; June 23, 2014). The official "*Legal Daily*" announced that at least 13 death sentences had been enforced (*Libération*; June 16, 2014 / *Reuters*; June 23, 2014). In order to calm down the deeply unsettled population, the

authorities claimed that about 96 percent of the offenses had been detected and defeated during their planning stage.

In Xinjiang/East Turkestan, China's law enforcement authorities believe in the deterrent effect of the death penalty. However, even Chinese criminal lawyers doubt it to be an effective measure in the context of keeping down the violence in the north-west of the country, as one could only discourage rationally acting perpetrators – but not persons, who act out of hatred or despair and feel that they have nothing left to lose.

Furthermore, there are repeated miscarriages of justice in connection with death sentences. Thus, following the riots in the city of Urumqi in July 2009, the 21-year-old Adil Rozi was sentenced to death and then executed for the alleged murder of a Chinese tradesman. For fear of the reaction of the Chinese authorities, his parents could not talk freely about their son and his conviction to this day. After his arrest, they had been denied to visit their son and were not allowed to find a lawyer of their choice. Moreover, the authorities had neither informed them about the accusations and subject of the charge nor about the impending penalty for their son. He was denied a fair trial. As one of his former teachers fled to Sweden recently, it became known that there are serious doubts whether the executed was guilty (*Radio Free Asia*; April 11, 2014): numerous witnesses reported that the young man had merely been a passer-by, who had happened to walk past a crime scene, but had nothing to do with the offense. Apparently, Chinese policemen had indiscriminately arrested Uyghur people in the streets of Urumqi. Rozi, too, had been among those arrested.

The impressive number of arrests and criminal proceedings published by the Chinese security authorities are deceiving and suggest constitutional conditions that actually do not exist. Uyghur people cannot rely on being treated fairly by China's legal system. Often enough, wearing a beard or being related to a person that is wanted by the authorities is enough to arouse suspicion and to be taken into custody. People who share information about the situation in their own region via the Internet or social media, or who participate in prayer rounds or religious festivals outside the officially approved mosques, are particularly at risk. Also, it is very dangerous to possess music, writings or films about the Uyghur culture, history and religion – as the law enforcement agencies regularly consider this to be a sign of support for so-called "separatist and religious extremism". Once being subject to an interrogation, Uyghurs have little chance to escape prosecution. Also, suspects are usually systematically intimidated and harassed during interrogation. So-called "confessions" are extorted under threats, torture and based on kin liability, although the Chinese laws prohibit this. Further, language- and communication

difficulties between the Chinese-speaking security forces and the Uyghur-speaking suspects have less chances to be treated impartially and fairly.

Most suspects are tried in summary proceedings without participation of the general public or relatives. The judges are under high pressure of being able to fulfill the "success rates" required by the politics. In these summary proceedings, fundamental regulations of the Chinese criminal procedure are often violated and the internationally recognized principles of fair trials are disregarded. Thus, the accused often have no legal representation or the lawyers are unable to access to the files timely or to contact their client. Many lawyers are reluctant to defend suspects in the context of anti-terrorism lawsuits. Lawyers who frequently and dedicatedly help clients in proceedings against the state must fear that their annual accreditation will not be renewed, that they will lose their job and – in consequence – might end up in the firing line of the investigators as "supporters of terrorism" themselves. Taking part in lawsuits of this kind is therefore also very risky for the lawyers, with the result that many lawyers practice self-censorship and do not denounce violations of the law by law enforcement authorities. In consequence, Uyghur defendants are mostly unable to find justice within the judicial system of the People's Republic, due to their ethnicity and religion.

By constantly publishing new "stories of success", China's security authorities try to give the impression that they are able to keep the escalation of violence at bay. Thus, they reported to have arrested 29 "terror suspects" on June 5, 2014 (*South China Morning Post*; June 5, 2014). On May 12, they had already published a report concerning the arrest of more than 200 Uyghur suspects during the previous six weeks (*South China Morning Post*; May 12, 2014). In May 2014, 39 Uyghur were sentenced to penalties of up to 15 years imprisonment – in 16 different trials – for incitement to hatred between ethnic groups and for spreading "terrorist videos" (*Agence France Presse*; May 21, 2014 / *The Hindu*; May 22, 2014).

In the prefecture of Kashgar, on June 25, 2014, public proceedings were held in eleven courts – against 113 defendants who were suspected of "terrorism and militant separatism". In the 69 trials, imprisonments ranging from ten years to life imprisonment were imposed (*Reuters/South China Morning Post*; June 30, 2014). All defendants bear Uyghur names. Three men were sentenced to ten years in prison because they refused to reveal the whereabouts of a wanted Uyghur. Another man will have to serve ten years of imprisonment as well, because he sent short messages to seven friends, in which he allegedly made hostile remarks about Han Chinese. A knife-salesman was sentenced to ten years in prison for selling various knives to a Uyghur, which were later used in an attack. All in all, the proceedings are to be seen as violations of just about all principles of

a fair trial, since – given the brevity of the proceedings – there was little chance for the lawyers of the accused to represent the interests of their clients adequately.

8. Crimes against the State frequently affect Uyghurs

According to the U.S. human rights group *Dui Hua Foundation*; three out of four people who were arrested for "endangering state security" in the People's Republic of China in 2012 are from Xinjiang/East Turkestan. For many years, the foundation has been fighting for the release of detained political prisoners in the People's Republic. The foundation regularly evaluates the statistical yearbooks of the legal system in China to get an overview of the development of the criminal law practice and the situation in the prisons. In 2011 and 2012 – according to information provided by the *China Law Yearbook* – 75 percent to 86 percent of all crimes against the state in China were tried before courts in Xinjiang, although the Uyghurs make up less than one percent of the total population of the country (*Dui Hua Foundation*; November 26, 2013). In 2013, the number of lawsuits with charges of "endangering state security" increased by a further 10 percent: to 296 proceedings in Xinjiang/East Turkestan (*Dui Hua Foundation*; February 10, 2014). In 2012, a total number of 1,105 persons were arrested for crimes against the state – an increase of 19 percent compared to the previous year (*South China Morning Post*; November 28, 2013).

According to the Chinese criminal code, there are twelve offences that are seen as crimes against the state, seven of which can be punished with the death penalty. In March 2014, Bo Xiao, the Chairman of the legislative commission in the regional parliament of Xinjiang, declared that the regional government was considering to issue anti-terror laws especially for the region (*South China Morning Post*; March 1, 2014). On the part of the Uyghurs, such statements only confirm the impression of a discriminatory treatment and of apartheid – which could lead to even more skepticism and mistrust between Uyghurs and Han Chinese. Chinese legal experts demanded that any new anti-terror laws would have to be strictly focused on the protection of human rights – but in vain (*South China Morning Post*; March 13, 2014).

China justified the legal initiative with a growing number of "terrorist offenses" in the autonomous region. Thus, in November 2013, the state news agency *Xinhua* declared in its magazine *Oriental Outlook* that more than 190 "terrorist attacks" had been committed in Xinjiang in 2012, which is a significant increase in comparison to the previous year (*Agence France Presse*; November 25, 2013). President Xi Jinping called for a "people's war" against terrorism and appealed to the public to pass on any relevant information on possible suspects to the security authorities. Some cities are offering a reward of up to

57,000 Euros for information leading to the arrest of "terrorists" (*South China Morning Post*; June 27, 2014). However, as no one asks about the causes of the violence, mistrust and hatred between Uyghurs and Han Chinese will continue to spread.

9. Humiliation instead of justice

As a deterrent against new acts of violence, the security forces also draw on old measures of repression used by the Communist Party: in 2014, there was a new wave of controversial show trials in Xinjiang/East Turkestan. In the city of Gulja (Chinese: Yining), 55 Uyghurs had to face a public mass trial in front of 7,000 spectators in a stadium on May 27, 2014. At least one of the defendants was sentenced to death (*Guardian/Deutsche Welle*; May 28, 2014). Before the show trial, the defendants had been driven through the city standing on open-backed trucks, wearing orange vests. Such unjust methods are internationally shunned and are considered to be degrading and humiliating. Further, these methods are also to be seen as violations of the Chinese criminal trial law, as the defendants are severely impaired in their rights of personality. *The Society for Threatened Peoples* and *Amnesty International* condemned the show trial as "shameful" and as a perversion of justice: a fair trial cannot be guaranteed under such conditions.

The public opinion in China may largely be in favor of such controversial forms of shaming the defendants – but the methods are incompatible with the rule of law. Also, demonstrations of alleged strength of this kind are not likely to be very effective, since they only cause further hatred and rejection on the part of Uyghurs. Ultimately, the officially proclaimed goal of more understanding between the ethnic groups seems to grow more and more distant.

The human rights violations will fuel new resentment, especially on the behalf of many residents of Gulja: The massacre, in which dozens of Uyghurs were killed by Chinese policemen in February 1997, is unforgotten. The victims had demonstrated for more religious freedom and for the release of detained protesters, when riot police opened fire on the crowd indiscriminately. After the bloodbath, China's security authorities had arbitrarily arrested several thousand Uyghurs – and at least 200 people were sentenced and executed for their alleged involvement in the protests. For the Uyghurs, Gulja has therefore become symbolic for the tyranny of China's Communist Party. From their point of view, the incident has a similar importance as the massacre at Tiananmen Square has for Han Chinese.

Despite massive international criticism, China's leadership sticks to the strategy of public humiliation against the members of the minority group. Thus, at the end of June 2014, nine Uyghurs were sentenced to up to 14 years in prison in another show trial in front of 3,000 spectators in the city of Qapqal (near the city of Gulja) (*South China Morning Post*; June 26, 2014).

10. China relies on counter-violence and security measures

Instead of asking for the causes of the escalating violence and reforming the failed nationality policy fundamentally, China's authorities obviously see no need for a reorientation and consider the Uyghur conflict to be a mere security problem. Thus, the security measures in the cities throughout the whole country were tightened significantly. Even more surveillance cameras were installed, patrols were carried out arranged and riot police were deployed to Xinjiang/East Turkestan. In May 2014, about 100,000 policemen, militiamen, firefighters and party cadres were involved in a large-scale security operation in order to search Internet cafes and small hotels for suspicious Uyghurs in Zhengzhou City in eastern China (*South China Morning Post*, 07/05/2014).

Even the universities are not spared from anti-terror measures. For example, the University of Internal Security of the People's Republic of China announced to educate 80 students in a new course of studies on anti-terrorism. The students are to be trained in courses focusing on inner security, computer- and cyber-crime, investigations against terrorist organizations as well as on international cooperation concerning anti-terror measures (*Xinhua*; May 11, 2014). The regional government of Xinjiang affirmed that the plan was to "ban terrorism from the campus" (*Frankfurter Rundschau*; December 2, 2013). Accordingly, students of the troubled province who are not convinced of the official politics who don't support the Chinese government's nationality policy should not be allowed to register for exams. In future, "politically unreliable students" will thus be forced to leave the university without a degree.

During his visit to Xinjiang/East Turkestan, president Xi Jinping stressed that the fight against terrorism must be one of the government's top priorities (*The Diplomat*; April 29, 2014). The visitor from the capital city stated that the city of Kashgar was the "front line" in the struggle against terrorism and the efforts to achieve stability. He added that local police stations played a central role, aiming to "train the local forces, which should play a leading role in the anti-terror fight".

Nowadays, as a matter of fact, there are more and more Uyghurs who kill members of their own ethnic group under Chinese order. Many of the policemen or auxiliary

policemen in Xinjiang/East Turkestan are actually from from the region (*Libération*; April 25, 2014). Several of the especially bloody special-forces operations were led by Uyghurs. But instead of showing more cultural sensitivity when dealing with the local people and their traditions, the security forces actually fuel the violence by assaults and by violations of the Muslim dress codes. For the Uyghur population, this is especially problematic because it may lead to deep fractures within the Uyghur society – starting on family level.

11. Five years after the unrest in Urumqi – the fate of the disappeared is still unclear

Five years after the unrest in Urumqi in July 2009, there are still more questions than answers about the escalation of violence back then. The unrest was triggered by the violent death of 17 Uyghur workers who died in acts of hatred and harassment of Han Chinese at a toy factory in Shaoguan (Guangdong Province) in southern China on June 25 and 26, 2014. More than 110 people had been injured in the attacks. Many of the migrants had been forced to work for companies in eastern China. The news about their deaths raised great concern and anger among many people in their homeland.

The news about the bloodshed spread like a wildfire in East Turkestan/Xinjiang. Relatives and friends of the victims were outraged, as the authorities obviously did not publish the actual number of victims. Also, the law enforcement authorities reacted very slowly. To ensure that the perpetrators of Shaoguan would not go unpunished, the Uyghur population wanted to increase the pressure on the authorities and called for a peaceful protest in Urumqi on July 5, 2009. In order not to provoke the Chinese security authorities and to avoid misunderstandings, some protesters even carried Chinese flags. They had hoped that their protest would not be misunderstood as criticism of the Chinese sovereignty in Xinjiang/East Turkestan or as a call for "separatism". But instead of reaching out to the protesters and promising them to bring the murderers to justice, the security officials reacted to the peaceful protests with full force. An increasing number of heavily armed riot police surrounded the protesters; they were filmed and taken into custody individually or in small groups. Several protest marches joined in the following hours, including a peaceful protest by women only, demanding the release of their arrested husbands and sons.

Uyghur protesters were attacked by well-trained Han Chinese thugs who were armed with clubs and bars. To this day, it is still unclear whether the attackers were indeed civilians or whether they were riot police or militiamen in civilian clothes. On part of the Uyghurs, the protest became more violent as well, causing several non-involved Han

Chinese and Uyghurs to be injured or even killed in the protests. To date, the actual extent of the unrest triggered by the bloody police operation is still uncertain.

Officially, it is assumed that 193 people died and 1,721 people were injured, but the number of victims is in fact likely to be significantly higher, as the fate of hundreds of missing Uyghurs is unclear to this day. Initially, many affected families did not dare to speak out in public about the disappearance of their relatives. But in the meantime, more and more families came forward to report on their unsuccessful months-long efforts to clarify the fate of their missing relatives.

Hundreds of people – including many pedestrians who were randomly passing by – were surrounded by riot police and soldiers and taken away to unknown locations. During the following six weeks, there were raids with hundreds of arrests. Among the disappeared are entrepreneurs, police officers, students, butchers, restaurant owners, farmers, farm workers, hairdressers, car mechanics, bakers, bus drivers, musicians and real estate agents.

Thus, on July 5, the butcher Turdimemet Tursunniyaz left his apartment to set off to his work place in Urumqi. But he never arrived there. For months on end, his mother went to police stations and hospitals, in order to clarify his whereabouts. To this day, there is no trace of him. The car-mechanic Abdurehim Sidiq left his apartment on July 5 to go and buy shoes in the city. Since then, his wife has not received any sign of life from him.

On August 15, 2009, the 16-year-old Nebi Eli was on his way in the city of Urumqi together with friends, when they were suddenly surrounded by police forces and then taken away in police vans. His father Elijan Rozi witnessed his son being beaten and arrested. Dozens of times, the parents called on the authorities to find their son. But the search remained unsuccessful to this day.

The 39-year-old bus driver Amantay Jumetay visited his parents on the evening of July 5, to make sure that they were safe. After that, he went on to visit his sister – but he never arrived at her house. His wife, who owns a hospital in Kazakhstan, repeatedly traveled to Urumqi to call on all possible authorities to help search for him – but without success.

The 35-year-old employee Alim Abdurehim did not take part in the public protests in Urumqi on July 5, 2009. The Uyghur merely made the mistake of engaging in an argument with a policeman who had cordoned off a road because of the protests. Since then, he has disappeared without a trace.

Some family members even risk their own arrest in order to find out more about the whereabouts of their loved ones. Thus, Patigul Ghulam was arrested on May 27, 2014 (*Radio Free Asia*; June 23, 2014). She is one of the mothers who publicly denounced the disappearance of her son. Her 25-year-old son Imammemet Eli was arrested by the police on July 14, 2009. The last time she heard of him was nine months later: a former prison inmate reported that Eli had been tortured and seriously injured, so that he had to be transferred to a hospital. Since then, there is no trace of him.

Many relatives suspect that the disappeared are no longer alive, when the time period since they last had a sign of life from the arrested grows longer – or if other inmates report about their whereabouts. Eyewitnesses stated that, a few days after the raids and the wave of violence, substantial groundwork with excavators and wheel loaders was carried out in a recreation area on the outskirts of the city. Relatives of the disappeared fear that the site could be a mass grave which was then filled. Most Uyghurs support their calls for more transparency and clarification of the fate of those who were arrested. They demand credible answers to the many questions raised by the riots of 2009 – and they demand an end to impunity and arbitrariness, as well as more respect towards the local population.

12. Money and assimilation instead of respect and rights

China's governance is starting to recognize the explosive nature of the situation in Xinjiang/East Turkestan. Thus, the Chinese head of state, Xi Jinping, promised more money and more education in order to increase the standard of living in the impoverished region (*Associated Press*; May 30, 2014). In 2014, 10.17 billion U.S. dollars shall be invested in 42 projects, focusing on water and electricity supply, health care and infrastructure projects (*Reuters*; February 12, 2014). In 2014, new high-speed trains are supposed to reduce the travel time on the 1776 km long route between Urumqi and Lanzhou (Gansu Province) from 21 hours to eight hours (*South China Morning Post*; June 17, 2014). Another ten rail projects are intended to extend the rail network in the region by 18 percent. Also, 450,000 new jobs are to be created. But the Uyghurs are skeptical and don't expect much effect from the official Chinese juggling with numbers, because they know very well that their chances of finding a job will decrease with every new attack. Uyghurs are being discriminated against on the labor market for quite a while because Han Chinese employers prefer people of their own ethnic group as employees and workers. With each new outbreak of violence, the gap between the two population groups increases; on the labor market as well.

The railroad projects draw criticism on the part of the Uyghurs, due to the fact that railway lines will lead to more flexibility on the labor market and to an influx of even more Han Chinese who want to benefit from the investment boom in the region. All previous experiences with the construction of new railway lines in Xinjiang/East Turkestan have shown that tens of thousands of new settlers from the east of China take up residence along the railroads. The Uyghur population is already complaining about having become a minority in their own country. While there were only a few thousand Han Chinese living in the region around 1945, they now make up 41 percent of the population; almost as many inhabitants as the Uyghur, which account for only 43 percent of the population. The state-supported steady influx of new Chinese settlers is one of the biggest issues between Uyghurs and the Chinese government. The local population calls for an effective control of migration and for the regional government to take adequate measures to establish an adequate population policy.

In the second *Xinjiang Work Forum* on May 28 and 29, 2014, in Beijing – which the entire politburo of the People's Republic participated in, it was decided that (in addition to strengthening the Communist Party), to further urbanization and ethnic mixing in the region. Also, there should be more jobs, an improvement of the living conditions and an expansion of the educational system (*China Brief, Volume XIV*; June 19, 2014). The declared goal is to create a common identity of the people in the region – a far-away objective, considering the ongoing lack of exchange and comprehension, the hatred and exclusion (*South China Morning Post*; May 26, 2014).

For the Uyghur population, the intended Sinicization of the region is problematic. The decisions of the work forum confirm their impression that the Government of the People's Republic is trying to undermine the Uyghur's rights and to destroy their identity.

Instead of showing respect for the different culture and granting the Uyghur population their constitutional rights (which are also confirmed by the autonomy laws), Beijing's leadership seems to have agreed on a forced assimilation of the minority group. This policy is a mistake, right from the very beginning: it will not help to stabilize the situation or to reduce the tensions between the ethnic groups – neither fairly soon nor in the long run.

13. No Internet freedom for Uyghurs

In the People's Republic, the freedom of the Internet is suppressed systematically. An army of more than 40,000 government censors and a targeted policy of intimidation lead to self-censorship. However, there is no other region in which the freedom of the

Xinjiang / Ostturkestan: Stop the cycle of violence!

Internet is trampled on as much as in Xinjiang/East Turkestan. Thus, the Chinese government launched a new campaign to fight "terror and violence" on the Internet on June 20, 2014 (*Reuters*; June 20, 2014). As part of the campaign and under the pressure from the authorities, more than 30 Internet companies (among them the leading suppliers in China, *Baidu*, *Sina*, *Alibaba*, *Tencent* and *Taobao*) agreed not distribute any material with "references to terrorism". Anyone who denounces Internet-content with such references is promised a reward of up to \$ 16,000. However, since there is no standardized definition of the terms "terrorist" and "terrorism", government censors in China are free to interpret the terms. Thus, the imprecise phrasing is an open door for arbitrariness – and China's authorities have made it abundantly clear that the campaign is to be carried out mainly in Xinjiang/East Turkestan. Thus, the censors can even interpret a video about the history of the Silk Road and the ancient culture of the Uyghurs as an illegal distribution of "religious extremism and Jihad".

The situation in 2014 was particularly threatening, the State Internet Information Office declared: Reportedly, "separatist forces" and "religious extremists" are trying to intensify their campaigns to receive support from abroad (*Xinhua*; June 20, 2014). Shortly after the bloody suppression of the unrest in Urumqi in July 2009, the authorities cut off all Internet and phone connections in the autonomous region of Xinjiang/East Turkestan for ten months. Due to this, the entire business communications broke down, causing considerable problems for businesses. The Chinese leadership was even willing to defray the high economic costs resulting from this sanction, in order to effectively prevent the exchange of information via Internet and mobile phone.

According to official figures, 110 Uyghurs were arrested in the region for Internet crimes between August and October 2013, while proceedings due to illegal "spreading rumors which destabilize the state and society" were initiated against 256 persons. 139 Uyghurs were accused of spreading rumors about the "Jihad and religious extremism" (*Uyghur American Association*; October 8, 2013). The anti-gossip campaign, which was launched in August 2013, is especially problematic for the Uyghur population, since it provides a legal pretext to criminalize the dissemination of any critical information about the situation in Xinjiang/East Turkestan. During the years 2009 to 2013, China's censors made use of the policy to arrest dozens of Uyghur web-hosts and sentence them to long prison terms. On *Weibo*, even news about the recent attacks in Urumqi were heavily censored (*South China Morning Post*; May 1, 2014).

Mobile phone owners in Xinjiang/East Turkestan are subject to special restrictions too. Since May 1, 2013, they have to reveal their true identity when buying a SIM card and send a photo of their identity documents to the mobile network operators (*Radio Free*

Asia; April 30, 2013). In March 2013, 20 Uyghurs were arrested for spreading "separatism and terrorism" on the Internet. They were sentenced to prison terms ranging from five years in prison to life imprisonment (*Radio Free Asia*; March 29, 2013).

14. Violations of the freedom of religion

The systematic denial of the freedom of religion for Muslim Uyghurs is to be seen as one of the main causes for the violence and significant deterioration of the security situation. There are new limitations and requirements almost every week, imposed on the believers either by the central government, the regional authorities or the local party cadres. Thus, at the beginning of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan at the end of June 2014, the Chinese authorities ordered every mosque in Xinjiang/East Turkestan to propagate the anti-terrorist campaign. Between ten and eighteen security forces are on duty in every mosque. Further, all entrances are equipped with surveillance cameras, to film every person entering the building. During the Ramadan month, the authorities canceled the holidays for all neighborhood-officials. Instead, they were requested to intensify the house-searches and to confiscate extremist religious material. Some houses or apartments were searched up to a hundred times. The neighborhood-officials were also prompted to increase the raids on Uyghur homes in order to prevent illegal prayer meetings.

In every city of Xinjiang, special monitoring teams were established to coordinate the operations during Ramadan. All restaurants were ordered to offer food at all times of day and not to close business during the fasting month (*Radio Free Asia*; June 26, 2014). Uyghur employees of authorities and party members are not allowed to follow the religious customs of Ramadan for quite some time already. In many schools, children and adolescents are also forced to disregard the rules of fasting. Ten Uyghur who took part in religious celebrations despite the ban, lost their positions as employees of the local authorities in the prefecture of Yili; or had to practice self-criticism. In the city of Karamay, all private religious discussions were prohibited during Ramadan – and it was forbidden to visit mosques outside one's own residential district. (*Radio Free Asia*; July 11, 2013).

In Xinjiang/East Turkestan, every aspect of the religious everyday life is systematically criminalized by the authorities. Thus, men who wear beards are methodically harassed. Their identity documents are frequently checked in public places or streets, so that they cannot move freely. Veiled women are denied access to public buildings. In August 2013, the authorities expelled a Muslim woman from her home in Urumqi. She had been wearing a veil and was therefore said to have defied the house rules (*Radio Free Asia*;

August 27, 2013). By order of the authorities, there are daily house inspections to assure that Muslim women abide by the house rules and take off their veil. If they refuse to do so, they risk to be thrown out of their apartment.

Authority representatives often demand Muslim women to disregard Muslim festivals and rites. In the district Shayar, for example, typical ceremonies such as the *Nikah* celebration were banned and penalized because they are seen as a non-compliant with the Chinese wedding laws. The background of the *Nikah* celebration is that the Imam asserts if it is the free will of bride and groom to get married (*Uyghur Human Rights Project*; May 8, 2014). Also, Muslim divorce regulations such as the *Talak* were declared illegal. Even funeral ceremonies are treated as violations of the law. Thus, the freedom of religion – which the Chinese constitution officially ensures, is systematically violated.

All lawyers that have a license for Xinjiang/East Turkestan were forced to ensure that their family members and relatives do not wear burqas or long beards and also that they do not take part in any illegal religious activities. In the city of Turpan, lawyers had to condemn religious extremism and sign an official document of dissociation (*Radio Free Asia*; November 13, 2013).

In some cities, women who disregard the veil-rules are forced to watch a movie that praises the female beauty and emphasizes the joy of showing one's face in public (*Agence France Presse*; November 25, 2013).

In June 2014, a spokeswoman of the Chinese foreign ministry denied that the unrest in Xinjiang was to be seen as a consequence of the restrictions on the freedom of religion (*Wall Street Journal*; June 24, 2014). But as a matter of fact, the opposite is true: The more China limits and violates the freedom of religion of the Muslim Uyghurs, the more the moderate and cosmopolitan Islam in East Turkestan will turn towards a more conservative religious practice. Within a few years, the number of veiled women has increased significantly in the streets of the region.

15. Arrests of Uyghur human rights activists stoke violence

The arrests of Uyghur human rights activists have increased dramatically in the years 2013/2014. The security authorities systematically try to silence dedicated human rights activists with fictitious evidence, with "confessions" made under torture or massive psychological pressure or with false criminal charges. On the part of the Uyghurs, the systematic persecution of peaceful human rights activists leads to hopelessness and – at

the same time – fuels the hatred against China's policy of disenfranchisement, marginalization and assimilation of the officially recognized nationality.

The following human rights activists were arrested during the recent months:

On January 15, 2014, **Ilham Tohti**, Uyghur Professor of Economics at the Beijing "Central University for Nationalities", was abducted by Chinese security forces from his apartment in the Chinese capital and brought to a detention center in Urumqi. On January 25, 2014, the "Public Security Office" in Urumqi published a message on its website, accusing Tohti of being involved in "separatist activities" and of "inciting ethnical hatred" (*Human Rights Watch*; February 27, 2014). Tohti was also accused of "founding a group without revealing his identity, of cooperated with leading separatist forces from East Turkestan living abroad, and of sending supporters abroad in order to further separatist activities" (*South China Morning Post*; March 6, 2014). A month after his disappearance, his wife learned that the authorities had issued an official warrant for Tohti's arrest and charged him with "separatism" (*South China Morning Post*; February 25, 2014). His wife Guzelnur stated that the allegations against her husband are "ridiculous". He had only ever worked as a professor and had not done anything illegal. In June 2014, Tohti's wife had turned to the Chinese administration with an emotional appeal, calling for him to be released. "Why are they doing this? Does China not have laws? Why won't they tell his family what is happening? It has been more than five months since Ilham was taken away and I have not heard a single word from him. All I can do is wait." (*The Telegraph*; June 19, 2014)

However, the chairman of the regional government of the autonomous region of Xinjiang, Nur Bekri, emphasized that Ilham Tohti was guilty: "The facts are clear and the evidence is irrefutable." (*South China Morning Post*; March 6, 2014). These statements made by the most influential communist party politician in the region can be seen as a prejudgment – a clear sign that Ilham Tohti had only slim chances for a fair trial. On 23 September 2014, he was sentenced to life in prison. Before the trial, Governments around the world have expressed their deep concern about his abduction; many foreign diplomats still appreciate Tohti as the most important specialist contact person of the civil society in China concerning the situation of the Uyghur population. Rather than considering Tohti's criticism of China's nationalities policy – as a nation of law should – the professor is locked away and silenced for the rest of his life. The court justified its harsh sentence against the economist with alleged incitement to separatism. His belongings are to be confiscated. The 23 September 2014 was a black day for all efforts to further a rule of law in the People's Republic.

His sentence to life in prison is especially tragic since he – despite criticizing the Chinese government's policies in Xinjiang via the websites *Uyghur online* and *Uyghurbiz*, which

were founded by him – always took a stand for an understanding between Uyghurs and Han Chinese. On his website, he provided information about the background of the unrest among the Uyghur population in Chinese language and thus mediated between the ethnic groups so often perceived as hostile. There are only few other voices among the Uyghurs in China that are so moderate and focused on balance. In recent months, the tensions and the politically motivated violence in Xinjiang have increased significantly. It bodes ill for the conflict region of Xinjiang/East Turkestan that the Chinese state security dares to silence a mediator between the cultures at such a sensitive time. Also, this obviously meticulously month-long planned suppression of the most important critic of the Xinjiang policy living in China – time and again, students of Tohti were arrested as well – leave doubts about the political will of the Chinese leadership to seriously seek a political solution to the Uyghur conflict. Thus, the illegal disappearance of Tohti's student Mutellip Imin (see below for further details on the case) seems to have been only a means to procure alleged evidence against the professor: Mutellip was surprised to find that, during the interrogations, most questions of the investigators concerned Professor Tohti, not himself.

Professor Tohti was aware that China's state security was planning to silence him. In the months before his abduction, he had reported about increasing intimidations by the Chinese security forces – such as an occurrence in November 2013 (*New York Times*; November 4, 2013). On November 2, 2013, Tohti was on the way to the Beijing airport – together with his wife and his three- and seven-year-old children – to pick up his mother, another car ran into the rear of his. When he and his wife got out to take a look at the damage, the occupants of the other vehicle which had struck them confiscated their mobile phones. They frankly admitted to have crashed into Tohti's car deliberately, in order to intimidate him and to stop him from giving interviews to foreign journalists time and again. When Tohti mentioned his two children and argued that they could have been injured in the accident, the driver simply cursed. Ever since this incident, Tohti was afraid that the authorities might take even more drastic measures against him. But he did not want to let himself be intimidated: "The more they threaten me, the more important it is for me to not mince my words." (*New York Times*; November 5, 2013)

For foreign journalists who do research on the situation of the Uyghurs in China, the professor is to be seen as the most important reference. Regularly, his criticism of the Chinese government's misguided policy is quoted in the media coverage of the troubled region of Xinjiang/East Turkestan. Tohti's media presence may have been the decisive reason for China's state security's many attempts to silence the prominent critic over the course of several months. He was put under house arrest several times or was not allowed to leave the country. When Liu Xiaobo was awarded with the Nobel Peace Prize

in December 2010, Tohti and his family were forcibly taken to the island of Hainan in the south of the People's Republic, where he was subjected to intense interrogation. In July 2011, his email address was hacked and used to send virus-infected emails to his friends. This is a common practice by hackers who work for the Chinese state security. Even his university was pressured: one of his seminars was canceled in September 2011 because, allegedly, the required number of 25 applications for the course had not been reached – but, actually, 59 students had registered for the course. In the previous semester, as a matter of fact, policemen showed up in a seminar, telling the astonished students that the professor was "talking too much".

In the beginning of the year 2012, his six-year-old son was denied admission to the elementary school without specific reasons. In August 2013, Tohti was finally arrested after he had exchanged a few words with a diplomat from the embassy of the European Union in China on a flight from Beijing to Urumqi.

However, Tohti refused to be silenced. Time and time again, he publicly criticized the discrimination against Uyghur in China's everyday life. When, in November 2013, the Uyghur universities in Xinjiang were officially ordered to only administer Uyghur PhD students who are loyal to the government, he described this as "dangerous" and "ridiculous" (*Radio Free Asia*; November 27, 2013).

Due to the massive pressure and intimidation by the authorities, Tohti had feared to be arrested and tortured in order to extract confessions for months already. Therefore, on July 24, 2013, he entrusted the Uyghur service of *Radio Free Asia* with a declaration via phone, which should be aired by the radio station in case he should be arrested. For fear of being tortured, he used the declaration to reaffirm that he was not suffering from any illness and that there were no external traces of violence on his body. Furthermore, he stated that he would never think of committing suicide. Also, he would never accept a public defender. Should he ever incriminate other people in a testimony, this could only be a consequence of being under duress or on drugs. In his statement, Tohti also emphasized that he had never joined a foreign based organization or a terrorist organization. His only goal and motto was to always stand up for the equal rights of the Uyghur people concerning cultural, religious and social issues. He had never endeavored to establish his own organization, but there had always been Uyghurs and Han Chinese, who shared his ideas. The only things he had always called for were human rights and autonomy rights. "Uyghurs should be able to receive the same respect given to the Chinese and they should also have the ability to preserve their dignity," Tohti he stated in the declaration, which – given the fact that he was in immediate danger – can be also understood as a political testament (*Radio Free Asia*; February 07, 2014).

Tohti was only able to meet up with his lawyers Li Fangping and Wang Yu once since his arrest in January 2014. The meeting was not arranged until there were rumors that Tohti had already been sentenced in a secret trial (*Guardian*; June 16, 2014). When the lawyers were able to visit him in prison in Urumqi on June 26, 2014, he reiterated his innocence and rejected all accusations of separatism. He appeared to be in an alarming health condition. He had already lost 16 kilograms in custody. Tohti reported that he had started a ten-day hunger strike on the day after his arrest, since the food that had been given to him had not been prepared according to the Muslim dietary guidelines and had not been *halal*. For ten days, he then only drank one and a half glasses of water each day. He is also suffering from severe prostate problems (*South China Morning Post*; June 27, 2014) and his wife expressed her deep concerns about his health (*Radio Free Asia*; June 27, 2014).

The two Uyghur students **Shohret Tursun** and **Perhat Halmurat** were arrested in Beijing on January 15, 2014. Two days later, the Uyghur student Abdukeyum Ablimit was arrested as well. The three young people are students of the *Central University for Nationalities* in the Chinese capital. Tursun is from Urumqi and Halmurat from the city of Gulja. They are committed to the human rights of the Uyghurs. Since they were arrested at the same time as their professor Ilham Tohti, it can be assumed that the arrests are related to Tohti's detention. Ablimit is to be trialed with "leaking state secrets", while Tursun and Halmurat are to be trialed for "separatism", the authorities declared (*Radio Free Asia*; February 26, 2014). All of them are facing prison sentences of several years.

Perhat Halmurat is the Editor of the website *Uyghur online*, which was founded by Ilham Tohti. When he wanted to fly to Istanbul on September 28, 2013, in order to continue his studies with a scholarship at the local university, the security forces stopped him at the Beijing airport and interrogated him for sixteen hours. Back then, he was only released after massive protests arose at home and abroad. (*Radio Free Asia*; November 21, 2013).

The Uyghur HIV/AIDS activist **Akebaier Yiming** was arrested in Urumqi on January 15, 2014, when he wanted to attend his father's funeral. His family was later informed that he had been formally arrested on suspicion of "endangering state security" (*South China Morning Post*; March 10, 2014). The 32-year-old civil rights activist worked for the non-governmental medical research institute *Aizhixing* in Beijing, which is especially dedicated to HIV/AIDS research. Yiming was particularly committed to stop HIV/AIDS and drug use spreading from spreading among the young Uyghurs.

The three Uyghur language activists **Abduweli Ayup**, **Muhammad Sidiq** and **Dilyar Obul** were arrested on August 20, 2013, and held custody in prisons in Urumqi. After months of delays, the charges against them were formally passed on to the prosecutor's office in

the district Tianshan in the prefecture of Urumqi and to the court of Urumqi on May 17, 2014. Usually, the court proceedings are then opened within about 20 days (*Radio Free Asia*; June 20, 2014). According to the Chinese authorities, the preliminary investigation against them had been extended once again in January 2014 – but without any specific information about the charges made (*Radio Free Asia*; January 31, 2014). According to his family, Ayub became seriously ill in custody; relatives and medical practitioners were not allowed to visit him.

Ayub studied at the *Central University for Nationalities* in Beijing and finished his Masters at the *University of Xinjiang* more than ten years ago. Later, he worked as a lecturer at the *Northwest University for Nationalities* in Lanzhou (Gansu Province). In the years 2005 and 2006 he was a lecturer at the *University of Ankara* (Turkey); and from 2009 to 2011 he studied linguistics with a U.S. scholarship at the *University of Kansas* (USA). During his stays abroad, he deliberately kept away from the Uyghurs living there in order to avoid difficulties with the authorities after his planned return to China. Other scientists tried to convince him to stay in the U.S. to continue his studies there. But Ayub wanted to return home, in order to promote the Uyghur language among children and adolescents.

Thus, in the summer of 2012, he founded the first exclusively Uyghur-speaking kindergarten in Kashgar. The Chinese authorities did not tolerate the kindergarten for long: it was closed down for poor reasons in March 2013. Yet, the linguist was not discouraged and then planned to open of a native-language kindergarten for Uyghurs in Urumqi. Together, the three civil rights activists Ayup, Sidiq and Obul founded the company *Mother-tongue International Trading Company* which should generate the financial resources to open up the kindergarten (*Movement for Mother Uyghur language based Education, World Uyghur Congress, Report*; February 2014; p 17). The initiative found broad support among the Uyghur, Kazakh and Uzbek people – and even got so much attention that a civil society movement for mother-tongue teaching was established in East Turkestan (Xinjiang).

The human rights activists strictly respected all Chinese laws in order to avoid difficulties with the authorities because, naturally, their activities and the broad support of the public had not gone unnoticed. Also, the initiators of the movement had contacted all relevant government institutions and ministries to explain their project.

It was only a matter of time until their courageous project was abruptly stopped. Upon arrest, the activists were accused of "accepting illegal donations". But, as a matter of fact, the incident was not about finances and the handling of donations, but about the role of mother-tongue kindergarten and school education for ethnic minorities in East Turkestan.

The dominance of Mandarin as a language of instruction in the educational institutions of East Turkestan is criticized – not unnoticed by the authorities. Officially, China claims that the schools offer "bilingual" education in Mandarin and Uyghur. However, language activists and human rights advocates have been calling for a further promotion of the Uyghur language for quite a while now, because this native language is increasingly being suppressed by Mandarin. Anyone who stands up for language rights is promptly regarded as a "separatist" or "terrorist" by the Chinese security authorities. Thus, the three imprisoned civil rights activists are facing prison sentences of several years because their commitment for teaching native languages in kindergarten turned out to be so popular among the civilian population.

The Uyghur student **Mutellip Imin**, who had studied in Istanbul (Turkey) until the summer of 2013, was arrested on January 15, 2014, in Hotan prefecture. Imin had voluntarily supported the website *Uyghur online* (founded by the Uyghur economist Ilham Tohti in Beijing). Presumably, Imin's arrest is related to Tohti's arrest, which took place almost at the same time. His whereabouts are still unknown (*Congressional Executive Commission on China, U.S. Congress; March 04, 2014*).

This was not the first time that the 24-year-old had to face problems with the Chinese authorities because of his commitment towards the human rights of the Uyghur population. When – after a stay in China – he wanted to travel back to Istanbul on July 14, 2013, to continue his university studies in Turkey, the security forces walked him off at the Beijing airport stopped him from leaving the country. Without an arrest warrant, the student was detained for 79 days in three hotels that are used as secret prisons, before he was finally released. His mobile phone, his residence permit for Turkey and his Turkish-language certificate had away been confiscated at the airport (<http://mutellipimin.wordpress.com>).

Accompanied by two Han Chinese and one Uyghur, he was flown to Urumqi. He was brought to a hotel, where he was monitored 24 hours a day and subjected to extensive interrogation. The police primarily wanted information about his professor Ilham Tohti. They also forced Imin to disclose all passwords for his mobile phones, social media accounts and websites. The police turned out to be especially interested in his administrator password for the website *Uyghur online*, which was founded by Tohti. But the password had been changed since Imin had to give up his work for the website due to his studies in Turkey.

After numerous interrogations Imin was assured to be allowed to fly to Turkey in mid-September 2013. However, his release was delayed even longer. Finally, he was allowed

to contact his family via phone for the first time since his arrest. He was ordered to lie to his family and to claim was already in Turkey. Also, he was supposed to tell his family that the news about his arrest were not true, but based on false reports by Uyghur "separatists". He decided not to lie to his relatives as he was told – and did not make any clear indications about his whereabouts during the monitored call, so the security forces got angry. They also demanded him to lie to his university in Istanbul and declare that he would not be able to resume his studies because his mother had been fallen sick. Finally, after 79 days of illegal detention and forced disappearance he was finally released on October 1, 2013, and put on a plane to his home region near Hotan. However, he was not given back his passport, so he was unable to continue his studies in Istanbul (*Radio Free Asia*; November 21, 2013).

Atikem Rozi, a 22-year old Uyghur student and a friend of Mutellip Imin, is regarded as disappeared as well. There is no trace of her since she was arrested on January 17, 2014. Rozi studied at the *Minzu University of China* in Beijing, where she took part in lectures and seminars by Ilham Tohti, the Uyghur lecturer who had been arrested two days earlier. In addition, she also worked for the websites *Uyghur online* and *Uyghurbiz*, which were both founded by Tohti.

In the last three years, the Chinese authorities refused to issue a passport for Rozi three times. She had planned to study abroad (*Radio Free Asia*; December 20, 2012). The student did not accept the decision but demanded a written explanation of why she was not allowed to have travel documents. The authorities did not send her a written explanation, but during a personal conversation there were hints that she was denied the documents due to "political reasons". Again, the student did not accept the authorities' refusal, so she initiated a social media campaign (based on, for example, the Chinese short message service *Weibo*) against discrimination of the Uyghur population concerning the issuance of travel documents. On the website *Uyghurbiz* – which she was in charge of, together with others – she regularly provided information about the encouraging response to her protests. Teng Biao, a Beijing-based lawyer and lecturer at the *China University of Political Science and Law*, considers the discrimination against the Uyghur population to be illegal, as reported by *Radio Free Asia* on December 20, 2012. Further, even if Uyghur people manage to receive a passport, they still cannot be sure that the documents will enable them to actually leave the country, as the case of Mutellip Imin clearly shows.

The Uyghur rights activist and blogger **Niyaz Kahar** was arrested in Urumqi on July 26, 2009. For three weeks, there had been serious unrests between Uyghurs and Han Chinese in the city, during which hundreds of people got killed. Despite many inquiries to

the authorities, the relatives of the blogger did not receive any news about his whereabouts for one year. His mother looked for the 34-year-old in every police station, every labor camp and turned to countless authority offices. For a long time, she feared that her son might have been killed in the unrest; hundreds of Uyghurs are still regarded as missing. Then, in the fall of 2010, his mother finally received the information that Niyaz had been convicted to 13 years in prison in a secret trial (*Radio Free Asia*; February 05, 2014). The mother was given no further information about the background of his conviction; yet after insistent inquiries by his sister, she was told that her brother had been convicted for spreading illegal messages. The civil rights activist had operated the website *Golden Tarim* – which is especially popular among young Uyghurs – for several years. Born in 1975, Niyaz studied literature at the University of Xinjiang and then worked at a local newspaper. Later on, he established the web service *Golden Tarim*, which focuses on information concerning Uyghur history, culture and politics.

Since China's authorities massively intensified Internet censorship in September 2013 (now, even the alleged spreading of rumors can lead to prison sentences of three years), it is virtually impossible for Uyghurs to legally discuss the situation in their homeland and go unpunished. Anyone who mentions dissatisfaction or considers protests can be arrested and sentenced to imprisonment for spreading false information or rumors. Thus, many of the imprisoned Uyghur human rights defenders are bloggers or website administrators.

Thus, the Uyghur human rights activist **Gheyret Niyaz** was sentenced to 15 years in prison in July 2010. He had criticized the co-responsibility of the Chinese authorities for the serious unrest in Urumqi in July 2009. At court, he was accused of "endangering state security". The long-time administrator and manager of the website *uyghurbiz.net* had been arrested on October 1, 2009. Previously, in an interview with a weekly newspaper in Hong Kong, Niyaz had criticized the fact that the authorities had failed to take action before the unrest, although there had been numerous warnings about imminent riots (*BBC*; July 23, 2010). Before the riots broke out, he had personally called on the authorities several times, trying to draw attention to the growing tensions. But unfortunately, his warnings had been ignored. The 55-year-old worked as a journalist for the business newspaper *Xinjiang Economic Daily* and had been director of the *Xinjiang Legal Daily*.

The two Uyghur webmasters **Dilshat Perhat** and **Nijat Azat** were sentenced to five and, respectively, ten years in prison on July 24, 2010, at the Intermediate People's Court in Urumqi for allegedly "endangering state security". The 32-year-old Dilshat Perhat had been the administrator of the website *Diyarim*, before he was arrested on August 7,

2009. In the days before, he had already been interrogated by the police because of a possible involvement in the riots in Urumqi in July 2009. Before the riots in Urumqi broke out, Dilshat had repeatedly deleted calls for protest from the webpage. He had even informed the Chinese police about the invocations and had asked them to be alert. Unfortunately, Dilshat's attempts to prevent an escalation of violence did not come off. On the contrary: after the protests had ended in a bloodbath, he was locked away in prison to avoid unpleasant inquiries, as the human rights activist had been very keen to know why his warnings had not been taken seriously.

The Uyghur web-host **Memetjan Abdulla** was sentenced to life imprisonment on April 1, 2010. One of the prosecutors' main charges against him was that he had given interviews to foreign journalists following the pogrom-like riots of Han Chinese against Uyghur workers at a factory in Shaoguan (Guangdong Province). In July 2009, the attacks had triggered the Uyghur protests in Urumqi that had ended in a bloodbath. The authorities also accused him of having translated a call for protest from a Chinese website and publishing it on his website *Salkin*.

Born in Karamay City in 1977, Memetjan had obtained a journalism degree in Beijing in 2001 and had since worked for the Uyghur service of *China National Radio*. In his spare time, he committed himself to civil rights of the Uyghurs and was the administrator of the website *Salkin*.

Gulmira Imino, a Uyghur woman who did voluntary work for *Salkin* as well, was punished with a life sentence on April 1, 2010. She was born in 1978 and had worked for the regional government in the town of Aksu for many years. In her spare time, she wrote poetry and supported *Salkin* with her voluntary activity as a moderator of the website since spring 2009. After *Salkin* – like many other websites – had published a call for protests in Urumqi in early July 2009, Gulmira was accused of "leaking state secrets, and organizing an illegal demonstration". Like many other demonstrators, Gulmira had been convinced that the protest was at least tacitly tolerated by the authorities, because the calls for protest were to be found all over the internet. Many Uyghur demonstratively held up Chinese flags during the protest march, to emphasize that the protest was not directed against China: the protestors had merely demanded adequate punishment for those who were responsible for the pogrom-like attacks on Uyghur workers in a factory in Southeast China.

The Uyghur **Abdukadir Mahsum** was sentenced to 15 years in prison on February 26, 2009 by a court in Hotan. It was said that he had organized a demonstration of hundreds of Uyghur men and women against human rights violations committed by the Chinese

Xinjiang / Ostturkestan: Stop the cycle of violence!

authorities in March 2008 (*Uyghur American Association*; March 16, 2009). The protest focused especially on religious persecution and the violent death of a detained Uyghur.

The *Intermediate People's Court* in Turpan sentenced the young human rights activist **Ekberjan Jamal** to ten years in prison. The young man (only 22 years old when he was arrested on December 25, 2007) was accused of "leaking state secrets" and "separatist activities" (*Radio Free Asia*; April 15, 2009). Above all, the authorities had to lay to his charge that he had allegedly sent information abroad via his mobile phone in 21 cases, in order to draw attention to human rights crimes and to the Uyghur protests. Thus, he is said to have sent sound recordings of the violent suppression of a protest of Uyghur businessmen to friends in the Netherlands, who then passed on the recordings to *Radio Free Asia*. The radio station used the sound-recording for a radio program, which **Ekberjan Jamal** also distributed on his personal webpage.

In July 2010, the Uyghur **Tursunjan Hezim** was sentenced to seven years in prison by the *Intermediate People's Court* in Aksu (*Committee to Protect Journalists*; March 10, 2011). The reasons for his conviction are not known, but presumably the verdict was supposed to punish him for his commitment for the Uyghur culture and history. On his website *Orkhun*, he provided information on Uyghur history by reference to numerous scientific articles and also campaigned for greater recognition and promotion of Uyghur culture. Before the Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008, his website was temporarily blocked. After the riots in Urumqi in July 2009, the website was ' by Chinese censors.