

A Letter from Kashgar

Translated by Torchlight Uyghur Group
November 26, 2018

Note: We received a letter on November 26, 2018. It was written by a Kashgar resident, photographed and sent to a relative living abroad via Chinese social media platform WeChat. The letter is 4 pages long, and was written by hand in Uyghur Arabic script. We removed the names of the people mentioned in the letter so that they will not be identified and punished by the local government.

In the current situation of Kashgar, 80% of the people (Uyghurs) are in the “re-education” camps and the other 15% people have been sentenced to jail. Only 5% of people are living outside voicelessly. Children from age 0 to school age are in orphanages and the better ones are normal and the worse ones have become uncommunicative. The parents of the children are in prisons or in reeducation camps. Their current conditions are little better than before. There has been not enough food for them for the last two years and they only got one piece of bread and a glass of water. Now they get rice with fried chives for one day and fried rice for another day. What their crimes are that firstly they have gone abroad and have been to some sensitive countries like Saudi Arabia and Egypt, etcetera. Secondly, they were allegedly suspected of trying to communicate with foreign countries using software app called Kuaiya (Kuaizip) on their smartphones. They have been sentenced to prison for 5 to 25 years. They were in miserable situation with bloodless (pale) and yellow faces and they looked very weak. People who are in jails and “re-education” camps are greatly increasing in number day by day. There are no boys and nobody left in families, and it is not exaggeration to say that almost everybody who applied for passport is in the jail now. Many people in “re-education” camps have already lost their minds. We youth have no peaceful days because we are related to somebody in “re-education” camps or some of our relatives have been abroad. We can’t walk on the streets freely because of our identity, and machines give out alarms when our ID card are scanned. In addition to these, all the people who made some fortune before have been disappeared now. Not a single family has a proper income nowadays. We have been forced to work leaving our elders at home and we are working since we have no choice.

Now, we are all bareheaded wearing T-shirts and pants and are not different from the comrades (she indicates the Han Chinese people). Any kind of books, headscarves, long dresses, coats, and praying rugs were taken from every single home. Our customs have been forcibly changed. Our people now are forced to marry without a Nikah ceremony and can’t have proper Islamic funeral if they die. Mosques have been turned into Buddhist temples or places to teach Chinese language to the Uyghurs. Some of the mosques have become activity centers for the neighborhood committees. Comrades (Han Chinese people) have taken over the mosques and made them into tile shops or nightclubs. We have no choice but have to continue to live with broken heart.

We (she means her own extended family) are not exception either. We go to study in the neighborhood committee and are learning law, politics, and Chinese language. We’re not allowed to take a break even if we have an emergency. We are getting by in such helplessness. In

our family, my elder brother **A** and **B** are in the “re-education” center for one and half year now. **C** has been detained in the 2nd Guo Bao (Domestic Security Protection Bureau). She was taken in July last year (2017) for receiving a phone call from overseas. It was her husband who called, but she was taken to check the voice recordings. In your family, your younger brother has been sentenced; your father has also been sentenced and disappeared. In **D**’s family, **E** has been sentenced for 14 years but his family thinks he got 7 years instead. **F**’s family is doing OK. Uncle **G** Ahun got seriously ill just before he was to be detained and his family had taken care of him at home since last year (2017); but he passed away in August this year after struggling with his illness. **H**’s husband from our neighborhood has been sentenced for 12 years for not much reason. Blacksmith **I*** was sentenced for 15 years for allegedly downloading Kuaiya (Kuaizip) software and trying to communicate with overseas. **J** Qari was sentenced to 12 years and my older sister **K**’s husband was sentenced for 11 and half years. My sister in-law’s elder brother, **L** Haji, has been sentenced for 12 years. His son has also disappeared. His younger brother **M** has lost his mind at the “school” (i.e. “re-education” camp). His elder brother **N** and my uncle **O** are also at the “school”. One of **P**’s daughters has also been sentenced for 6 years. My aunt **Q** was sentenced to 7 years and your sister-in-law **R** was also given 7 years. **S** and your younger uncle are at “school”, but your elder uncle is at home and safe. However, your son, your daughter-in-law and your daughters are not safe – I don’t know what their current situations are.

There are so many people who died at the “schools” and jails because of the weakened body due to poor diet. In addition, everyone there looks to be pale, white and weak and as if something has happened to them. My friend **T** Henim was sentenced for 7 years and her husband for 11 years. As I said, there are so many people who are dead or jailed. None of us can freely talk to the investigators sent from the above. If you said something by accident, your whole family would disappear. It was the separation from their beloved ones, their husbands, wives, parents, friends, brothers and sisters that resulted in the people to have cerebral hemorrhage, to die from the heart attack, and to be permanently paralyzed. It is safe to say that there is not a single family in Xinjiang who is at peace now. This includes the counties of the Kashgar Prefecture. So many women are in jails and “schools”, and their children have been placed at orphanages. These women can’t see their children even once in a year, so that the children now can’t recognize their mothers anymore. You’re safer than all of us, but please don’t be sad and blame yourself. God Himself will protect us. But our Muslim nation is being disappeared; only some of us are staying alive. We have heard rumors about Chairman Xi being indicted by other countries and those rumors have since disappeared. It will be great if we can be safe and free again. Right now, we can’t do anything. Our national ID cards have been collected and marked, so that we need to swipe the card even when we enter our own homes. We also can’t go beyond the Ostengboyi area (in the Kashgar City). But there are no restrictions at all for the Han Chinese who recently came from the Inner China – they can go into our own neighborhoods without any problem. We can only go to Hambazar market and Tashtek Bazar and are not allowed to walk in the other streets. At every 100 meters there is a police check point, there the Chinese policemen check our phones and IDs. Please don’t think about any of these and take good care of yourself and the children. We put our trust in God; God will take care of us and you.

We hope to convey this information to the international organizations and hope that they will help us to be free from the miserable situation we are in at the moment. I know that you have

more freedom than us to inform the world about us. We hoped that the UN might be able to do something when they investigated the situation, but the Chinese government faked everything and pressured people to tell the opposite of what is happening. People are helpless here, they can't tell the truth to the media or to the UN investigators, they are fearful for their lives. My husband was sentenced for 5 years and now his jail time is almost over. Hopefully, he will get released next year, if God wills. 90% of my brother's friends are gone. He himself is OK, but has been confined to his house. There is a word 'fugitive' on his ID card to prevent him from going anywhere. Even one of our relatives has that note on his ID card, and as a result, being related to him, we are also banned from traveling freely in Kashgar city without obtaining several different permissions from our neighborhood committee and the police. I am telling you the truth because I hope you can find a way to help us, a way that doesn't harm you and us. We will talk to you soon; I am in a hurry now, take care!

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