

URGENT ACTION

MORE UIGHUR STUDENTS AT RISK OF FORCIBLE RETURN
Another 10 Uighur students were forcibly returned by the Egyptian authorities back to China, bringing the total to 22 in July, while approximately 200 more remain at risk of being forcibly returned to the country. They would be at real risk of serious human rights violations if forcibly returned to China.

On 1 July, the Egyptian authorities began a massive roundup of Chinese nationals in Egypt, mainly Uighurs, but reportedly also Muslim students from Hui and Han ethnicities. On 6 July, the Egyptian authorities forcibly returned at least 12 Uighur students to China, and a further 10 Uighur students between 11 and 14 July. The Egyptian and Chinese authorities have disclosed no information about the fate and whereabouts of the students who had been forcibly returned to China.

According to information provided to Amnesty International, the Egyptian authorities continue to detain more than 200 Uighurs students, many of them are studying at al-Azhar University. Most of the students are detained in Tora Prison in Cairo. Egyptian and Chinese officials interrogated the detained students in at least four separate occasions so far. They questioned the students on their studies, activities and stay in Egypt. According to a lawyer representing some of the students, Egyptian policemen physically assaulted the students, and prevented them from receiving water or food from outside the prison.

Radio Free Asia reported that four Chinese security agents accompanied by two Egyptian plainclothes police officers attempted to arrest a Uighur activist at his residence in Cairo on 23 July before he fled. Amnesty International has been informed that Uighur students in hiding are now afraid to leave their home because of the security crackdown.

Uighurs have experienced serious human rights violations at the hands of the Chinese government for decades, including arbitrary and incommunicado detention and restrictions to their religious freedom and social and cultural rights. The lives and freedoms of the detained Uighur students' would be at risk should they be returned to China.

Please write immediately in Arabic or English or your own language:

- Urging the Egyptian authorities, in accordance with their obligations under international law, to halt forced removals of Uighurs from Egypt to China where they would be at risk of serious human rights violations;
- Urging them to ensure that the detained Uighur students have access to a fair and efficient individualized asylum process, and the ability to challenge any removal orders;
- Urging them to ensure that detained Uighurs are able to legally challenge their continued detention, are protected from ill-treatment and any allegations of ill-treatment are fully and impartially investigated.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 12 SEPTEMBER 2017 TO:

Interior Minister

Magdy Abdel Ghaffar
 Ministry of Interior
 Fifth Settlement, New Cairo, Egypt
 Fax: +202 2794 5529
 Email: center@moi.gov.eg or
 E.HumanRightsSector@moi.gov.eg
 Twitter: @moiegy
Salutation: Your Excellency

President

Abdel Fattah al-Sisi
 Office of the President
 Al Ittihadia Palace
 Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt
 Fax: +202 2391 1441
 Email: p.spokesman@op.gov.eg
 Twitter: @AlsisiOfficial
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Deputy Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs
 Laila Bahaa Eldin
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 Corniche el-Nile, Cairo, Egypt.
 Fax: +202 2574 9713
 Email: contact.us@mfa.gov.eg
 Twitter: @MfaEgypt

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR NASSER AHMED KAMEL ALI, Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 26 South Street W1K 1DW, 020 7499 3304/2401, Fax 020 7491 1542, eg.emb.london@mfa.gov.eg and etembuk@hotmail.com Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 168/17. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde12/6681/2017/en/>

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 INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Uighurs are a mainly Muslim ethnic minority who are concentrated primarily in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in China. Since the 1980s, the Uighurs have been the target of systematic and extensive human rights violations. This includes arbitrary detention and imprisonment, incommunicado detention, and serious restrictions on religious freedom as well as cultural and social rights. Local authorities maintain tight control over religious practice, including prohibiting all government employees and children under the age of 18 from worshipping at mosques. Chinese government policies limit the use of the Uighur language, impose severe restrictions on freedom of religion and encourage sustained influx of Han migrants into the region.

According to Radio Free Asia, the Chinese authorities began to compel Uighur students who were enrolled in universities abroad to return to China since May 2017. Sources told Radio Free Asia (RFA) that the students who returned to China had not been heard from following their return. According to several media reports, the Chinese government has also confiscated the passports of Uighurs, in another effort to control their movements. In the last year, China has ramped up its restrictions on Islam, including banning Islamic baby names, making children and government employees eat during Ramadan, and sending government employees to stay in people's homes to ensure that they do not pray.

Violations of Uighurs' human rights have persisted for many decades, but have intensified in recent years. Following the attacks on the United States of America (USA) on 11 September 2001, the Chinese authorities utilized the "war on terror" to justify an intensification of repression of Uighurs. Since then, the authorities have cast Uighur discontent within the framework of international terrorism, and frequently interpret expressions of Uighur cultural identity not validated by the state as evidence of "separatist" behaviour.

In May 2014, a one-year "strike hard" campaign was launched in the XUAR, and officials prioritized speedy arrests, quick trials and mass sentencing of Uighurs. The government called for greater "co-operation" between prosecuting authorities and courts, raising additional concerns that accused individuals would not receive fair trials. The "strike hard" campaign has been extended in the subsequent years, and the authorities have massively increased their expenditure on police. Under such circumstances, many Uighurs make the decision to flee the country. The Chinese authorities have responded by harassing the relatives of those who have left in order to pressure them to return and increasing attempts to curtail the political and human rights activities of Uighur activists in other countries. This has led to growing fears among many Uighurs abroad, including asylum seekers and refugees, of being forcibly returned to China. In recent years, dozens of Uighur asylum seekers have been forcibly returned from South East Asian or Central Asian countries, to China.

Under customary international law and international human rights law, the principle of non-refoulement prohibits Egypt from transferring individuals to another country or jurisdiction where they would face a real risk of serious human rights violations or abuses.

Further information on UA: 168/17 Index: MDE 12/6848/2017 Issue Date: 1 August 2017