

# URGENT ACTION

## MEDICAL PRACTITIONER HELD INCOMMUNICADO

**Shafkat Abasi, a member of the Tatar ethnic minority, was detained by Chinese authorities on 13 March of 2017 and has not been heard from since. It is believed his detention is due to accessing foreign websites from his computer, connection with an elderly patient who is an imam, and his possession of banned religious books. His family have not been provided with any information and fear that he is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.**

**Shafkat Abasi** (Chinese: Xiafuhati Abasi), living in Urumqi in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR), was detained by the Urumqi Public Security Bureau on 13 March 2017. According to information obtained by his brother, an Australian citizen, it is believed that Shafkat Abasi was detained due to foreign websites being accessed from his computer. A member of the Tatar ethnicity and a licensed practitioner of Uighur traditional medicine, police have subsequently expanded their investigation of Shafkat Abasi to include his connections with an 80-year-old imam and his possession of books on history and religion.

In May 2017, his brother flew to Urumqi from Australia to find out more about Shafkat Abasi's detention and went to a police station in Nanhu District in Urumqi to enquire about visiting him. Speaking to a vice police commissioner on 8 May, he was told that visiting his brother was not possible, however if he left a copy of his passport and phone number the police would get in contact. Over seven months later the brother has yet to receive further information from the police.

Family members believe that Shafkat Abasi may be held at the Changji Prison in the XUAR, however they do not know whether he has been charged with any crime and are unable to visit him.

This situation is not uncommon in the region and under the leadership of new regional Communist Party Secretary Chen Quanguo, XUAR authorities have engaged in an unprecedented crackdown targeted at ethnic minorities and Muslims. Techniques used include the widespread use of arbitrary detention, technological surveillance, heavily armed street patrols, security checkpoints and an array of intrusive policies violating human rights.

### **Please write immediately in Chinese, English or your own language:**

- Release Shafkat Abasi (Xiafuhati Abasi) unconditionally and immediately unless there is sufficient credible and admissible evidence that he has committed an internationally recognized offence and is granted a fair trial in line with international standards, and
- Ensure that while he remains in detention, Shafkat Abasi (Xiafuhati Abasi) has regular, unrestricted access to family and lawyers of his choice, and is not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 20 FEBRUARY 2018 TO:**

Party Secretary of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region  
Chen Quanguo  
479 Zhongshan Lu  
Wulumuqi Shi, Xinjiang  
People's Republic of China  
**Salutation: Dear Secretary**

Prison Director  
Changji Jianyu  
Changji Si hao Xinxiang, 831105  
Changji, Xinjiang  
People's Republic of China  
**Salutation: Dear Director**

**And copies to:**  
Premier  
Li Keqiang Zongli  
Guowuyuan Banggongting  
2 Fuyoujie, Xicheng Qu  
Beijing, 100017  
People's Republic of China  
Fax: +86 10 65961109  
Email: premier@mail.gov.cn

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.** HIS EXCELLENCY MR LIU XIAOMING, Embassy of the People's Republic of China, 49-51 Portland Place W1B 1JL, 020 7299 4049, [press\\_uk@mfa.gov.cn](mailto:press_uk@mfa.gov.cn)

**Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.**

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Shakfat Abasi is an ethnic Tatar, one of the 56 officially recognized ethnic minorities in China. The Tatars, a Turkic ethnic group, originally come from Russia and other post-Soviet states. According to family members, the grandparents of Shakfat Abasi came to Ghulja (Chinese: Yining) from Russia, in order to flee from Stalinist persecution. According to the 2010 Chinese census, there are 3,556 Tatars in China.

Shakfat Abasi studied traditional Uighur medicine at Xinjiang Uighur Medicine College in Hotan for five years, and later had a successful business and a clinic in Urumqi, supplying medicines throughout the region. He is married and has three children.

Authorities in the XUAR are currently fighting what they describe as an “anti-terrorism people’s war” in state media. In March 2017, the XUAR enacted the “De-extremification Regulation” that identifies and prohibits a wide range of behaviours labelled “extremist”, such as “spreading extremist thought”, denigrating or refusing to watch public radio and TV programmes, wearing burkas, having an “abnormal” beard, resisting national policies, and publishing, downloading, storing, or reading articles, publications, or audio-visual materials containing “extremist content”. In recent months there have been several media reports indicating that numerous detention facilities have been set up within the region, variously called “counter extremism centres”, “political study centres”, or “education and transformation centres”, in which people are arbitrarily detained for unspecified periods of time and forced to study Chinese laws and policies. Many of the targets are people who have been found praying, holding religious books, or who have been abroad or have family members living abroad.

Media reports from Radio Free Asia, Buzzfeed, the Globe and Mail, and others indicate that in the spring of 2017, authorities throughout the region began detaining Uighurs en masse, and sending them to these detention facilities or sentencing them to long prison terms. This crackdown has not only been applied to Uighurs, but to other predominantly Muslim ethnicities, such as Kazhaks, Kyrgyzs.

According to Radio Free Asia (RFA) and the Associated Press (AP), Chinese authorities have been compelling Uighur students enrolled in universities abroad to return to China since April 2017. In December 2017, RFA reported that two Uighur men who had voluntarily returned to the XUAR from Egypt, died in detention. The two men had no known health issues, leading to fears that they were tortured to death. One of the men, Yasinjan, was profiled by AP.

RFA has also reported that several “re-education centres” suffer from overcrowded and squalid conditions.

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