

URGENT ACTION

LENGTHY IMPRISONMENT FOR UYGHUR RETIRED DOCTOR

Retired Uyghur doctor Gulshan Abbas was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment in a secret trial for "taking part in organized terrorism, aiding terrorist activities and seriously disrupting social order" in March 2019. Her family learned about this sentencing through a trusted source 21 months later in December 2020. They believe that Gulshan Abbas's lengthy sentencing is linked to the activism for Uyghurs of Gulshan Abbas' relatives in the US. Gulshan Abbas has multiple chronic diseases that require constant monitoring and regular medical treatment. The fact that Gulshan has no access to her family members for more than two years raises serious concerns for her health and wellbeing.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Director Wang Jiang

Prison Administration Bureau of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region
No 380, Huanghe lu, Urumqi
830000, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region
People's Republic of China

Dear Director Wang:

I am writing to express my grave concern about **Gulshan Abbas** (古丽先·阿巴斯), a retired Uyghur doctor who was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment in a secret trial for "taking part in organized terrorism, aiding terrorist activities and seriously disrupting social order" in March 2019. Her relatives only knew about the lengthy sentencing more than 21 months later in December 2020 and have subsequently confirmed it with Chinese authorities.

I find it distressing to learn that, ever since Gulshan Abbas went missing in Urumqi on 10 September 2018, no official information about her whereabouts or condition has been shared with her family. Her family believe that she might have been sent to a "transformation-through-education" facility before she was imprisoned.

No concrete evidence against Gulshan Abbas has been made public, but Gulshan Abbas' family believe that her lengthy sentencing is because of the activism for Uyghurs by her relatives overseas. This would appear to be an example of collective punishment aimed at restricting the right to free expression and the work of human rights defenders.

I find it very troubling to also learn that Gulshan Abbas has undergone surgery on both her eyes and suffers from multiple chronic diseases including high blood pressure, back pain and severe recurring migraines. It is therefore of critical importance that she receives regular and adequate medical care.

I therefore call on you to:

- **Release Gulshan Abbas unless there is sufficient, credible and admissible evidence that she committed an internationally recognized offence and is granted a fair trial in line with international standards;**
- **Pending her release, disclose Gulshan Abbas' whereabouts, allow her access to her family, a lawyer of her choice as well as prompt and adequate medical care, as necessary or requested, and ensure she is not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.**

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Gulshan Abbas is a retired doctor from the Xinjiang Oil Field Company Ming Yuan Workers Hospital in Urumqi, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Xinjiang). She had an early retirement because of her health problems.

It is believed that Gulshan Abbas was taken away just days after her sister Rushan Abbas, a Uyghur activist in the US, made a speech about the mass detention of Uyghurs in Xinjiang. Rushan has since come under attack by Chinese official media, such as the *Global Times*, which has accused her of being a “separatist” and spreading rumours about the detention of Uyghurs in Xinjiang. This would not be the first time that relatives of activists have been targeted, as Amnesty International has documented several cases of harassment and intimidation of Uyghurs overseas by the Chinese authorities.

Xinjiang is one of the most ethnically diverse regions in China. More than half of the region’s population of 22 million people belong to mostly Turkic and predominantly Muslim ethnic groups, including Uyghurs (around 11.3 million), Kazakhs (around 1.6 million) and other populations whose languages, cultures and ways of life vary distinctly from those of the Han who are the majority in “interior” China.

In March 2017, the Xinjiang government 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”. The regulation also set up a “responsibility system” for government cadres for “anti-extremism” work and established annual reviews of their performance.

It is estimated that up to a million Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other predominantly Muslim people have been held in the “transformation-through-education” centres. The Chinese authorities had denied the existence of such facilities until October 2018, when they began describing them as voluntary, free “vocational training” centres. They claim that the objective of this vocational training is to provide people with technical and vocational education to enable them to find jobs and become “useful” citizens. China’s explanation, however, contradicts reports of beatings, food deprivation and solitary confinement that have been collected from former detainees. China has rejected calls from the international community, including Amnesty, to allow independent experts unrestricted access to Xinjiang. Instead, China has made efforts to silence criticism by inviting delegations from different countries to visit Xinjiang for carefully orchestrated and closely monitored tours.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Chinese, English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 23 February 2021

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Gulshan Abbas (she)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa17/2401/2020/en/>

And copies to:

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