

URGENT ACTION

KAZAKH FAMILY AT RISK OF TORTURE IN DETENTION

Weilina Muhatai and her two sons, Muheyati Haliyoula and Parisati Haliyoula, have been missing since August 2020. All ethnic Kazakhs living in China's Xinjiang region, their possible detention is thought to be linked to the activism of their husband and father, who they suspect to have died in detention in December 2020. With no communication or access to them for more than six months, there are grave concerns for the health and wellbeing of Weilina Muhatai, Muheyati Haliyoula and Parisati Haliyoula.

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

Director Gao Qi

Director of Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture Public Security Bureau
398 Nanhuan Lu, Yining Shi 835000
Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture
Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region
People's Republic of China
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Dear Director Gao:

I am writing to express my concern for ethnic Kazakh **Weilina Muhatai** (维丽娜·木哈太) and her two sons, **Muheyati Haliyoula** (穆哈亚提·哈力尤拉) and **Parisati Haliyoula** (帕日萨提·哈力尤拉), who all went missing in August 2020. Despite attempts by family members overseas to make contact, there has been no communication with them for more than six months.

I find it distressing to learn that no official information about their whereabouts or condition has been shared at all. Their possible detention is believed to be linked to the activism of their husband and father, who they suspect to have died in a "transformation-through-education" facility in December 2020.

I am gravely concerned about the health and wellbeing of Weilina Muhatai, Muheyati Haliyoula and Parisati Haliyoula. With no contact having yet been made with them to date, and given the repeated allegations of torture and other ill-treatment in violation of international law in Xinjiang's detention facilities, I believe their safety and lives are at risk.

I therefore call on you to:

- **Release Weilina Muhatai, Muheyati Haliyoula and Parisati Haliyoula unless there is sufficient, credible and admissible evidence that they committed an internationally recognized offence and are granted a fair trial in line with international standards;**
- **Pending their release, disclose the whereabouts of Weilina Muhatai, Muheyati Haliyoula and Parisati Haliyoula; allow them access to their family and lawyers of their choices, as well as prompt and adequate medical care, as necessary or requested; and ensure they are not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.**

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Weilina Muhatai and her late husband Haliyoula Tuerxun are retired civil servants. Their sons Muheyati Haliyoula and Parisati Haliyoula are a businessman and music teacher, respectively. Their eldest son is currently living in Kazakhstan.

Haliyoula Tuerxun, Weilina Muhatai, Muheyati Haliyoula and Parisati Haliyoula were all put into “transformation-through-education” facilities in March 2018. Weilina Muhatai, Muheyati Haliyoula and Parisati Haliyoula were released in early 2019 and have been closely monitored by the authorities ever since.

Haliyoula Tuerxun’s family was informed that he was sentenced to 20 years’ imprisonment in a secret trial, however no details about the crime that he had supposedly committed has ever been shared. In December 2020, his family was told by a trusted source that he had died while in detention. The Chinese authorities have never disclosed anything about Haliyoula Tuerxun’s death to his family. His son living in Kazakhstan is worried that his death may have been caused by torture or ill-treatment during detention, as there have been allegations of torture and ill-treatment in Xinjiang’s detention facilities. Before he had been detained in March 2018, he exposed the death of an ethnic Kazakh in a “transformation-through-education” facility.

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

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 21 March 2021

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

NAME AND PRONOUN: Weilina Muhatai (she/her), Muheyati Haliyoula (he/him) and Parisati Haliyoula (he/him)

And copies to:

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