

# URGENT ACTION

## 20 RELATIVES OF UIGHUR JOURNALIST DETAINED

**Approximately 20 relatives of Gulchehra Hoja, a Uighur journalist living abroad, have been detained and are at risk of torture. Based in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) of China, her family members are all thought to have been targeted due to Gulchehra Hoja's work.**

Gulchehra Hoja, a journalist based in the USA who has worked at Radio Free Asia's Uyghur Service for 17 years, has been unable to contact her 72-year-old mother **Chimanguli Zikeli** since January 2018. Her mother had surgery on her foot in mid-January, and suffers from heart disease and diabetes. In addition, she has been unable to reach her father **Abduqeyum Hoja**, 77, who is currently in hospital partially paralyzed following a stroke. He now requires constant medical care. Her brother, **Kaiser Keyum**, who had been the primary care giver for their parents, was taken away by the authorities in October 2017. Believed to be detained at the XUAR No. 1 Detention Centre, it is unclear whether he has been detained through the formal criminal justice system, or not.

Gulchehra Hoja also learned from two reliable sources that approximately 20 other relatives have also been taken away by the authorities. Among these, seven cousins – **Elshat Abduwali, Gheyret Abdurahman, Daniyar Abdukerim, Madina Mutalip, Mirzat Mutalip, Gulpiya Almas, Izhar Almas** – were taken away by the authorities on 31 January and are being held at the Ghulja Yengi Hayat Prison, apparently due to being in a social messaging WeChat group with Gulchehra Hoja. An eighth cousin, **Mehray Kahar**, is being held in a facility in Urumqi.

Under the leadership of the regional Communist Party Secretary Chen Quanguo, numerous detention facilities have been set up within the XUAR. Referred to as "counter extremism centres", "political study centres", or "education and transformation centres", these are facilities in which people are arbitrarily detained for unspecified periods and forced to study Chinese laws and policies. People are often sent to these detention facilities if they are known religious practitioners, have relations with "foreign contacts", or have themselves been caught up in social stability campaigns or have relatives who were involved in the same.

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

- Release all Gulchehra Hoja's relatives and drop any charges against them unless there is sufficient credible and admissible evidence that they have committed an internationally recognized offence and are granted a fair trial in line with international standards.
- Ensure that everybody in the XUAR is able to communicate with family members and others, including with family members living in other countries, without interference unless justified in line with international human rights law.
- Ensure that the parents of Gulchehra Hoja can access and receive timely, appropriate, and affordable medical care as required.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 12 APRIL 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**

Detention Centre Director  
Kanshuosuo Suozhang  
Yining Shi Kanshuosuo  
Yingayati Jie 245 hao  
Yili Diqu, Yili Shi, 835000  
Xinjiang,  
People's Republic of China  
**Salutation: Dear Director**

**And copies to:**  
President of the Supreme People's Court  
Zhou Qiang Yuanzhang  
Zuigao Renmin Fayuan  
27 Dongjiaomin Xiang  
Beijingshi 100745,  
People's Republic of China  
Fax: +86 10 65292345  
**Salutation: Dear President**

**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

Media reports and information obtained by Amnesty International indicate that people in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region are at great risk if they communicate with their relatives who live overseas. Authorities have detained people who receive phone calls from outside of China. Authorities have also tried to ensure that nobody uses encrypted messaging apps, and instead rely on domestic apps, which have no encryption or other privacy safeguards.

After not being able to get in contact with her mother and father, Gulchehra Hoja called her aunt to seek further information, but her aunt told her, “My child, I had a heart attack, you don’t have to worry about me, you don’t have to worry about your parents – don’t call us again”.

On 28 February, the Washington Post reported that three other journalists at Radio Free Asia’s Uighur service faced the same situation, with their family members in the XUAR detained in apparent retaliation for their relatives’ overseas journalism.

Gulchehra Hoja was a host of a children’s television program in the XUAR in the 1990’s. Gulchehra is one of the most well-known Uighur journalists, having been a star of a children’s program in the 1990’s and then later working for Xinjiang TV. After going abroad to the USA, for the last 17 years she has worked at Radio Free Asia’s Uyghur Service, which is one of the only outlets providing independent news about the situation in the XUAR. Independent reporting in the XUAR is extremely difficult, and foreign reporters face numerous restrictions and harassment by the authorities. According to the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of China’s annual report for working conditions in China from 2017, 73% of foreign correspondents who took the FCCC’s survey who travelled to the XUAR in 2017 were told by officials and security agents that reporting was prohibited or restricted, compared with 42% in 2016.

While Uighurs and other predominately Muslim ethnic minorities in the XUAR have long suffered violations of their rights to freedom of religion and association and other human rights, over the past year or more, authorities have engaged in an unprecedented crackdown targeting them. Techniques of repression include the widespread use of arbitrary detention, technological surveillance, heavily armed street patrols, security checkpoints and an array of intrusive policies violating human rights.

There have been numerous reports that Chinese authorities in the XUAR have effectively sidestepped the procedural protections afforded to criminal defendants under Chinese law. Many Uighur detainees have been denied legal counsel, and in addition to the widespread use of administrative detention, there are reports that in some places police have been given the authority to directly sentence individuals to prison terms, bypassing the courts.

Media reports from Radio Free Asia, BuzzFeed, the Globe and Mail, the Associated Press and others, as well as information gathered by Amnesty International, indicate that in the spring of 2017, authorities throughout the region began detaining Uighurs en masse, and started sending them to administrative 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 Kazaks, and Kyrgyzs.