

PRISONERS OF FAITH NEW CAMPAIGNS



WARNING: Some of the contents of this report deal with torture and may cause distress

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Foreword

Assalaam alaikum

The information about the prisoners of faith in this campaign pack was firstly distributed at the Prisoners of Faith conference held in February 2002. There are five prisoners of faith who IHRC have begun campaigning for the release of. Highlighted also are worsening repression of Muslims in China and Uzbekistan by the respective countries’ governments.

IHRC have also produced detailed campaign packs on the following prisoners of faith: Sheikh Abdulkareem Obaid & Mustafa Dirani (Lebanon), Sheikh Ali Benhadj (Algeria), Sheikh Omar Abdelrahman (USA), Nureddin Sirin, Mehmet Ali Tekin & Tamar Aslan (Turkey), Muhammed Cehl Fakeemeeah (Mauritius) and Imam Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin (USA). These can be ordered from IHRC or obtained from the website www.ihrc.org. We have produced a set of accompanying notes which can be used in conjunction with each campaign pack. The notes give reasons as to why we should campaign, list successful campaigns and the addresses of several Muslim embassies in the UK.

All letters should be sent to Mrs Mary Robinson, UN High Commissioner on Human Rights to the address below as well as any additional addresses given in each section.

Mrs Mary Robinson
UN High Commissioner on Human Rights
OHCHR-UNOG
8-14 Avenue de la Paix
1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland

Tel: 00 41 917 9000
Fax: 00 41 22 917 9012/9006/9005
email: webadmin.hchr@unog.ch

The website <http://www2.tagish.co.uk/Links/embassy1b.nsf/>
provides addresses of different embassies
both in the UK and abroad

SUDAN - Dr. Hassan al-Turabi

Background

On the 19th February 2001, Dr. Hassan al-Turabi's opposition party to the Sudanese Government, the Popular National Congress (PNC) signed a "memorandum of understanding" with the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) of Southern Sudan, in Switzerland. This memo called for the Sudanese government to lift the existing state of emergency in place since December 1999, to allow political freedoms and freedom of press and the release of all political detainees. The pact also called for peaceful resistance against President Omar al-Beshir.

However, on the 21st February, Dr. Turabi was arrested at his home in Khartoum. Beshir was quoted calling the pact a "violation of law" and that the government would "not tolerate such acts". So far, sources have reported the arrest of 95 PNC officials, whilst the authorities are still looking for 19 PNC members. This month, six lawyers on Turabi's defence team were individually summoned by security authorities. All six were among the 25 who recently submitted a plea to the Constitutional Court for Turabi's release, arguing that his 123 day "precautionary detention" order had expired on February 4th. Turabi however, remains detained despite the fact that the charges against him were dropped in September of last year.

The government further extended the national state of emergency to the end of 2002. Since December 2000, the National Security Act allows suspects to be detained indefinitely without charge, and denied judicial review for upto six months. Members of other opposition parties, such as the umbrella National Democratic Alliance (NDA), also face charges of 'treason' and 'threatening the existence of government'. The press was also continuously censored throughout 2001. The English language newspaper, the Khartoum Monitor, was suspended on several occasions by security forces or by the National Press Council. Section 66 of the Sudanese Penal Code has been open to abuse by the Sudanese authorities to include any criticism of the government.

Furthermore, Human Rights Watch reported the continuation in 2001 of army militia forces abducting women and children in the south, mostly in northern Bahr al-Ghazal. While the government had created the Committee to Eradicate the Abduction of Women and Children (CEAWC), the Committee had been 'ineffective' according to HRW. In addition, several reports of torture and ill treatment during detention had been received by HRW, mainly by security forces in the southern garrison town of Juba.

The situation remains tense and volatile, and many continue to be subject to cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment. Urgent attention must be given to those who remain detained without charge.

Help to secure Dr. Hassan al-Turabi's freedom by taking part in our letter writing campaign.

Names and Addresses of Recipients for letters for Dr Turabi

Dr. Hassan Abdeen (Ambassador)
The Embassy of the Republic of the Sudan
3 Cleveland Row
St. James's
SW1A 1DD

Tel: 020 7839 8080

Dr Ahmed Elmufti
The Advisory Council of Human Rights of the Government of Sudan
P O Box 302
Khartoum
Sudan

Tel: 00 249 11 779 173

Liet General Omar Hassan Ahmed Al Bashier
The President
The Republican Palace
P O Box 281
Khartoum
Sudan

Staff Fax: 00 249 11 779 977

President's Advisor on Ta'asil (Islamic affairs)
Prof Ahmed Ali Al Iman
Address: As above

Fax: 00 249 11 777 247

Ambassade du Sudan
Paris
56 Avenue Montaigne
75008 Paris
France

Tel: 01 42 25 55 71/73/76
Fax: 01 45 63 66 73

Embassy of the Republic of Sudan
2210 Massachusettes Avenue NW
Washington DC 20008
USA

Tel: 00 1 202 338 8565
Fax: 00 1 202 667 2406

Embassy of the Republic of Sudan
354 Stewart Street
Ottawa
Ontario
K1N 6K8

Tel: 00 1 613 235 4000/4999
Fax: 00 1 613 235 6880
Email: Sudanembassy-canada@rogers.com

Model letter for Dr. Turabi

Name
Address

Date

Name of Recipient
Address of Recipient

Dear [Name of Recipient]

I am writing with extreme concern over the continued detention of Dr. Turabi in the absence of any charges against him. Since February 2001 when the opposition party to the Sudanese Government, the Popular National Congress (PNC) signed a “memorandum of understanding” with the Sudan Peoples’ Liberation Army (SPLA) of Southern Sudan, in Switzerland, party members have been subjected to arbitrary arrests and torture. Human Rights Watch had received several reports of torture and ill treatment during detention, mainly by security forces in the southern garrison town of Juba.

So far, sources have reported the arrest of 95 PNC officials, whilst the authorities are still looking for 19 PNC members. This month, security authorities individually summoned six lawyers on Turabi's defence team. All six were among the 25 who recently submitted a plea to the Constitutional Court for Turabi’s release, arguing that his 123-day “precautionary detention” order had expired on February 4th. Turabi however, remains detained despite the fact that the charges against him were dropped in September of last year.

The memo called for the Sudanese government to lift the existing state of emergency in place since December 1999, to allow political freedoms and freedom of press and the release of all political detainees. The Government however has done exactly the opposite. It further extended the national state of emergency to the end of 2002. Since December 2000, the National Security Act allows suspects to be detained indefinitely without charge, and denied judicial review for upto six months. Members of other opposition parties, such as the umbrella National Democratic Alliance (NDA), also face charges of 'treason' and 'threatening the existence of government'. The press was also continuously censored throughout 2001. Furthermore, Section 66 of the Sudanese Penal Code has been open to abuse by the Sudanese authorities to include any criticism of the government. Such actions by the Sudanese Government stand in direct contravention to the rights of the individual.

I urge you to push for the immediate release of Dr. Turabi, in light of there being no charges against him. I also urge that you investigate the whereabouts of the remaining 'missing' PNC members. The Government has furthermore failed to reduce the level of abductions of women and children by army militia forces in the south, despite the creation of a Committee (CEAWC) to deal with such problems. This is far from satisfactory. The situation remains tense and volatile, and many continue to be subject to cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment. Urgent attention must be given to those who remain detained without charge.

I look forward to your reply regarding this serious violation of human rights.

Yours sincerely

Name

IRAQ – Al-Sayyid Muhammad Ridha Zain al-‘Abidin al-Mussawial-Khalkhali

Background

In the days following the arrest of the Grand Ayatollah Abu al-Qassem al-Kho’I, Shi’a Islam’s most senior cleric, by Iraqi government forces, a total of **108** people, including theology students, aides, staff and family members of the Grand Ayatollah, were detained.

Of the 108 people arrested at the same time, *two* have been released. There has been no news about the fate or whereabouts of the other 106 detainees since their arrest, placing them into the ‘category’ of those who “disappeared” while in custody. Some of the detainees may have been tortured and some may have been, or remain at serious risk of being executed. “If they have been executed, I am not going to apologise for this”, said Tariq Aziz, the Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1992.

“Disappearance” is a grave violation of human rights and their systematic practice is of the nature of a crime against humanity. “Disappearance” violates the right to liberty and security of person, the right to recognition as a person before the law and the right not to be subjected to torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. It also violates, or constitutes a grave threat to, the right to life.

Shi’a Muslims, together with other religious, racial and ethnic groups in Iraq, such as Kurds, Turcomans and Assyrians, have been the victims of continuous and serious human rights violations for many years. The arrest and subsequent “disappearance” of the Shi’a clerics, students and relatives of the Grand Ayatollah, took place in the context of the brutal suppression by Iraqi forces of the uprising which swept across the country in the weeks following the defeat of the Iraqi army in the Gulf War.

Sixty-three year old Al-Sayyid Khalkhali had studied religion at the University of al-Najaf before becoming one of its senior scholars and an aide to the Grand Ayatollah Khoie. He is married with six children, all of whom have been denied any knowledge as to his whereabouts. Despite numerous requests for information about the conditions of the 106 detainees by international organisations and various Special Rapporteurs to Iraq, the Government of Iraq denies any knowledge as to where they are. In the meanwhile, the grave possibility of torture and execution remains.

Please help to ensure the government of Iraq is forced to investigate as to the whereabouts of Al-Sayyid Khalkhali and the 105 other detainees by joining our letter writing campaign.

For information on the campaign against sanctions on Iraq, please see the IHRC campaign pack.

Names and Addresses of Recipients for letters for Al-Sayyid

Dr. Mudhafar Amin
Minister/Head of Iraqi Interests Section
21 Queens Gate
London
SW7 5JG.

Model letter for Al-Sayyid

Name
Address

Date

Name of Recipient
Address of Recipient

Dear [Name of Recipient]

I am writing with extreme concern over the “disappearance” of Al-Sayyid Muhammad Ridha Zain al-‘Abidin al-Mussawi al-Khalkhali, alongside 105 other detainees, who have not been seen since 1991 after their arrest. Sixty-three year old Al-Sayyid had studied religion at the University of al-Najaf before becoming one of its senior scholars and an aide to the Grand Ayatollah. He is married with six children, all of whom have been denied any knowledge, as to his whereabouts. Despite numerous requests for information about the conditions of the 106 detainees by international organisations and various UN Special Rapporteurs to Iraq, the Government of Iraq denies any knowledge as to where they are. In the meanwhile, the grave possibility of torture and execution remains, if it has not already been carried out.

The United Nations has condemned “disappearance” as a grave violation of human rights and has said their systematic practice is of the nature of a crime against humanity. “Disappearance” violates the right to liberty and security of person, the right to recognition as a person before the law and the right not to be subjected to torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. It also violates, or constitutes a grave threat to, the right to life. Eleven years have passed now, however the whereabouts of the detainees remains a mystery to this day. This is intolerable.

I urge you to use your position to pressurise the Iraqi government to immediately investigate the whereabouts of the 106 “disappeared” detainees. Serious human rights violations have been made and *immediate* action must be taken to bring the guilty to justice. The Iraqi Government must be made to uphold all international covenants relating to human rights which have been previously ratified.

I look forward to your reply regarding this serious disregard for justice and the right to life.

Yours sincerely

Name

PALESTINE - Shaykh Ali Abdullah Khalil Abu al-Rabb

Background

Thirty seven year old Shaykh Ali Abdullah Khalil Abu al Rabb comes from Qabatiyah village near Jenin in the West Bank. He was the imam of a masjid there and a hafiz (memoriser) of the Quran. Shaykh Ali was distinguished for his Islamic propagation activities in his home village and in Jordan. His wife and two children have not seen him since he was detained, in 1992.

Shaykh Ali's crime is that he is a member of the Izz al Din Brigades, the military wing of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas). Detained in 1992, he served an initial eight month period of internment. Most of that time was spent under interrogation between Jenin prison and Asqalan prison. After the end of his first eight month sentence, Shaykh Ali was re-arrested and interrogated instead of being sent home. On this occasion, he was sentenced to four years imprisonment.

During his second term, the Shaykh was interrogated more than twenty times. At the end of the term he was still not released. He was again re-arrested and interrogated. He was sentenced to five years in prison even though there was no evidence or confession from him.

The 1993 Oslo Accords made no progress upon the issue of releasing Palestinian detainees. Under the Taba Agreement of 1995, the issue of detainees was subjected to progress in the building of confidence between the two sides. Thus, if the peace process ran into any difficulties, the release of prisoners was delayed. Indeed, the Israelis have gone so far as to link the release of Palestinian prisoners with the release of its spies held in foreign jails, including the United States. Instead of being subjected to the law of the Geneva Conventions, to which they are entitled, Palestinian detainees are treated as criminals subject to Israeli military law.

It is a well known fact that during interrogations, internal security forces practice torture on the detainee, in order to 'extract' information or a confession. The International Convention Against the Use of Torture (CAT) to which Israel is a signatory, prohibits the torture of detainees, *even in a public state of emergency*. Yet the Israeli state since 1996 promulgated what it called the "Shabek Law". The High Court and Knesset (parliament) sanctioned the torture of prisoners by members of Shabak (internal security) "providing that the means employed would be reasonable". On the contrary, the means employed are inexcusable. Physical torture can vary from violent shakings, electrical shocks and beatings, to repeated strangulation, long hours standing, and the use of technological equipments that do not leave marks on the detainee's body. Psychological torture, including sleep deprivation, solitary confinement and distorted position standing, are also widely used. A report by the International Red Cross published in 1998 stated that the Jewish state detained about 700,000 Palestinians since 1967. More than 90% of them were subjected to various forms of extreme torture.

Shaykh Ali is still subjected to many forms of cruel interrogation. The last time this took place was in Maskubiyah prison last year. He was subjected to every type of torture. He has been suffering from several illnesses because of his detention. Among them, rheumatism and breathing difficulty.

The people of Qabatiyah bear witness that Shaykh Ali never rested or spared any effort to enjoin right, forbid evil and encourage the resistance against the Zionist occupation.

Source: Palestinian Return Centre

<http://www.prc.org.uk>

Help to secure Shaykh Ali Abdullah Khalil Abu al-Rabb's freedom by taking part in our letter writing campaign.

Names and Addresses of Recipients for letters for Shaykh Ali.

Mr Jack Straw MP
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

Tel: 020 7270 1500
<http://www.fco.gov.uk> for details of foreign policies etc

Model letter for Shaykh Ali

Name
Address

Date

Name of Recipient
Address of Recipient

Dear [Name of Recipient]

I am writing with extreme concern over the continued detention of Shaykh Ali in the absence of any charges against him. Thirty seven year old Shaykh Ali Abdullah Khalil Abu al Rabb comes from Qabatiyah village near Jenin in the West Bank. He was the imam of a masjid there and a hafiz (memoriser) of the Quran. Shaykh Ali was distinguished for his Islamic propagation activities in his home village and in Jordan. His wife and two children have not seen him since he was detained, in 1992.

Shaykh Ali is still subjected to many forms of cruel interrogation. The last time this took place was in Maskubiyah prison last year. Physical torture can vary from violent shakings, electrical shocks and beatings, to repeated strangulation, long hours standing, and the use of technological equipments that do not leave marks on the detainee's body. Psychological torture, including sleep deprivation, solitary confinement and distorted position standing, are also widely used. He was subjected to every type of torture. He has been suffering from several illnesses because of his detention. Among them, rheumatism and breathing difficulty.

The International Convention Against the Use of Torture (CAT) to which Israel is a signatory, prohibits the torture of detainees, *even in a public state of emergency*. Yet the Israeli State since 1996 promulgated what it called the "Shabek Law". The High Court and Knesset (parliament) sanctioned the torture of prisoners by members of Shabak (internal security) "providing that the means employed would be reasonable". It is clear beyond a shadow of doubt that the methods used by security forces against Palestinian civilians are far from reasonable - they are barbaric and illegal. Instead of being subjected to the law of the Geneva Conventions, to which they are entitled, Palestinian detainees are treated as criminals subject to Israeli military law.

I urge you to thoroughly investigate the detention of Shaykh Ali and to ensure that his family is able to see him and that his state of health can be assessed. These are all rights that the law guarantees him, even if he is kept behind bars. In the absence of charges against him, he should no longer be detained. Serious human rights violations have been made and immediate action must be taken to bring the guilty to justice. Furthermore, the Israeli Government must be made to uphold all international covenants relating to human rights which have been previously ratified.

I look forward to your reply regarding this serious disregard for justice and the right to life.

Yours sincerely
Name

SAUDI ARABIA - Dr. Said Bin Zu'air

Background

In early 1995 Dr. Said Bin Zu'air - who was then head of the Department of Information at Imam Muhammad Ibn Sa'ud University - was arrested at his home in Riyadh by members of al-Mabahith al-'Amma (General Intelligence). *Seven years later*, he has been denied any access to lawyers, and continues to be held in Al-Ha'ir Prison without charge, trial or any opportunity to challenge the legality of his detention.

To this day, Dr. Said bin Zu'air remains a prisoner, as he is regarded as a critic of the state. The government of Saudi Arabia continues to commit grave human rights violations. Furthermore, as reported by Amnesty International, the government continues to deny that there are any political prisoners or prisoners of conscience imprisoned in the country. Political and religious activists continue to be subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention without trial. Those brought to trial are invariably convicted and sentenced after secret and summary trials.

Such acts are concretely in violation of international law. The right to a fair trial is one of the oldest human rights established in favour of the individual. Dr Said is not able to defend his sentence for he has no knowledge of the charges, and is isolated from legal assistance.

His treatment has indeed constituted a serious violation of his human rights.

Help to secure Dr. Said bin Zu-Air's freedom by taking part in our letter writing campaign.

Names and Addresses of Recipients for letters for Dr. Said bin Zu-Air.

Dr. Ghazi A. Algosaihi
Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia
30 Charles Street
Mayfair
W1X 7PM
Switzerland

Tel: 020 7917 3000

Email: saudiembassy@yahoo.co.uk

Model letter for Dr. Said bin Zu-Air

Name
Address

Date

Name of Recipient
Address of Recipient

Dear [Name of Recipient]

I am writing with extreme concern over the continued detention of Dr. Said bin Zu-Air in the absence of any charges against him. In early 1995 Dr. Said Bin Zu'air - who was then head of the Department of Information at Imam Muhammad Ibn Sa'ud University - was arrested at his home in Riyadh by members of al-Mabahith al-'Amma (General Intelligence). *Seven years later*, he has been denied any access to lawyers, and continues to be held in Al-Ha'ir Prison without charge, trial or any opportunity to challenge the legality of his detention.

I am deeply shocked that to this day, Dr. Said bin Zu'air remains a prisoner, as he is regarded a critic of the state. The government of Saudi Arabia continues to commit grave human rights violations. Furthermore, as reported by Amnesty International, the government continues to deny that there are any political prisoners or prisoners of conscience imprisoned in the country. Political and religious activists continue to be subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention without trial. Those brought to trial are invariably convicted and sentenced after secret and summary trials.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is only one of the internationally recognised instruments that guarantees the right to a fair trial, to legal representation, to be free from torture and to be treated humanely in all circumstances. The Government of Saudi Arabia has failed to uphold its obligations to the people and to Dr. Said bin Zu-Air in all these respects.

I urge you to ensure that the Government of Saudi Arabia releases Dr. Said bin Zu-Air on account of there being no charges against him. He is a political prisoner of conscience and has a legal right to challenge his detention. Furthermore, I urge you to investigate into the treatment of detainees and their whereabouts. The bypassing of the law in sentencing is not only barbaric but is inhumane and contrary to the international obligations of the Government of Saudi Arabia.

I look forward to your reply regarding Dr Said bin Zu-Air and this serious violation of human rights.

Yours sincerely

Name

Rabbi Biton - A Voice of Justice from Within

Background

On Friday the 7th of December 2001, successful dean Rabbi Biton, a Moroccan Jew and important member of Neturei Karta of Jerusalem, was sentenced to prison indefinitely at the hands of the Israeli authorities. His crime – peacefully voicing his opposition to both the ideology of Zionism, and Israel's continuing illegal occupation of a people. Sadly, freedom of expression has become a crime – if you are the one expressing a desire for freedom.

Neturei Karta is an organisation founded in 1938 by the People of Israel who dedicated themselves to living life according to the wishes of God, as exposed in the Torah. Their denouncement of the State of Israel is not a by-product of a political debacle. On the contrary, the majority of sages at its birth saw it as a force of destruction, a betrayal of their exile and Gods desire for man to live in peace with each other. Neturei Karta members speak against the Zionist pursuit of material salvation through war and destruction of the self as well as others. (For further information visit www.netureikarta.org .)

Since his protest against the Zionist desecration of the dead in `1998, Rabbi Biton has been the victim of severe beatings, harassment and imprisonment. As a result of the peaceful visit by Neturei Karta delegates to the Orient House at the end of April 2001, Rabbi Biton was again arrested and sentenced to six months national service. From the Court, he was taken to a factory on the pretext that he was to start his national service, and then deliberately placed into a room with several women dressed in a manner that conflicted with his religious beliefs. He escaped and was shortly re-arrested and refused permission to take any religious articles such as prayer books, prayer shawl, the bible and so forth. Neither was he allowed to take any kosher food. This state of affairs continued until he went on a hunger strike, refusing to eat any of the food supplied by the prison. Since then he is allowed food from outside the prison.

To this day, Rabbi Biton remains detained and continues to be a political prisoner of conscience. He has committed no crime. His fate now sits in the hands of those who fight for justice and continue to awaken the conscience of others. If one speaks out as another is silenced, our world will not become mute.

Help to secure Rabbi Biton's freedom by taking part in our letter writing campaign.

Names and Addresses of Recipients for letters for Rabbi Biton

Mr Jack Straw MP
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

Tel: 020 7270 1500
<http://www.fco.gov.uk> for details of foreign policies etc

Model letter for Rabbi Biton

Name
Address

Date

Name of Recipient
Address of Recipient

Dear [Name of Recipient]

I am writing with extreme concern over the continued detention of Rabbi Biton in the absence of any charges against him. Since his protest against the Zionist desecration of the dead in 1998, Rabbi Biton has been the victim of severe beatings, harassment and imprisonment. As a result of the peaceful visit by Neturei Karta delegates to the Orient House at the end of April 2001, Rabbi Biton was again arrested and sentenced to six months national service. From the Court, he was taken to a factory on the pretext that he was to start his national service, and then deliberately placed into a room with several women dressed in a manner that conflicted with his religious beliefs, from which he escaped after objecting to, to no avail. Placing him in such conditions was a deliberate act of provocation as security forces knew he would object to this, because of his religious beliefs. He was shortly re-arrested and refused permission to take with any religious articles such as prayer books, prayer shawl, the bible and so forth. Such action stands in direct violation of the rights accorded to prisoners in the Geneva Conventions.

To this day, Rabbi Biton remains detained and continues to be a political prisoner of conscience. He has committed no crime.

I urge you to thoroughly investigate the allegations against Rabbi Biton in the hope of securing his release, due to him having committed no crime. Freedom of speech is a universally declared right, yet Rabbi Biton is being unfairly persecuted for his beliefs. The Israeli Government must be made to uphold all international covenants relating to human rights which have been previously ratified.

I look forward to your reply regarding this serious violation of human rights.

Yours sincerely

Name

CHINA – Human Rights Abuses

Background

For over fifty years, the right to practice one's religion in peace has been an internationally recognised right, firmly embedded within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, for the majority of China's Muslim population today in the predominantly Turkic province of Xinjiang, such freedom remains more of a myth than reality.

The Chinese government has ordered many Muslims in tense Xinjiang to ignore religious rules during the holy month of Ramadan. Muslims are forbidden from fasting and women have been ordered not to wear the hijab.

Hotan Hygiene School, which trains nurses in the southern Xinjiang city of Hotan, is only one of the institutions who are 'cracking down' on those who wish to practice their faith. Teachers are being told to increase their "political ideology training" because of what's been happening in Afghanistan. Students who refuse to comply with the orders, despite their religious beliefs, can be expelled. Children in elementary and middle schools have been ordered not to fast, despite it being mandatory in Ramadan for all Muslims except infants, the infirm or pregnant women.

The aftermath of September 11th has given rise to more terror than thought. The crisis has given China's leaders an opportunity to crack down on separatists with renewed ferocity. Ethnic Uyghur Muslims in the predominantly Turkic province of Xinjiang, many of whom support the establishment of an independent nation, East Turkestan, free from Beijing, have been the victims of intensifying repression. China has repeatedly insisted it has a major problem with Uyghur "terrorists" in Xinjiang, whom it claims have been trained in Afghanistan. Those captured fighting for an independent Islamic state are sentenced to vile public humiliation and execution for their crime of "disturbing public order". The treatment that they undergo is nothing but cruel, inhumane and degrading.

On the 25th September 2001, such an incident occurred. Standing under a 1000ft granite statue of Chairman Mao, the handcuffed Islamic prisoners were set on display for public ridicule for a full hour. As a final insult to their faith, they had been fed alcohol with their last meal, before they die. Their suffering however shall not end there. In line with 'local custom', the families of the two men who were shot in the back of the neck, will receive the bullet as a warning to future generations.

This is not the first time that such barbarity has been displayed, and it will not be the last. Help to change the Chinese Government's practice of religious discrimination and its serious abuse of prisoners' human rights by joining our letter writing campaign.

For more information, please visit: The American Uyghur Association website: - <http://www.uyghuramerican.org/>

Names and Addresses of Recipients for letters

Mr. Ma Zhengang
Embassy of the People's Republic of China
49-51 Portland Place
W1N 4JL

Tel: 020 7299 4049

Model letter for Chinese human rights situation

Name
Address

Date

Name of Recipient
Address of Recipient

Dear [Name of Recipient]

I am writing with extreme concern over the current human rights situation in the predominantly Turkic province of Xinjiang, in China. The Chinese government has ordered many Muslims in tense Xinjiang to ignore religious rules during the holy month of Ramadan. Muslims are forbidden from fasting and women have been ordered not to wear the hijab. Teachers are being told to increase their “political ideology training” because of what's been happening in Afghanistan. Students who refuse to comply with the orders, despite their religious beliefs, can be expelled. Such demands by the Chinese Government are abhorrent. They contradict a person's freedom of religion, which is a non-derogable right guaranteed to them in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as in numerous other international conventions. To denounce a person's religion and prevent them from peacefully practicing it becomes nothing less than persecution when practiced on a wide-scale.

I am highly disturbed to see that the aftermath of September 11th has given rise to more terror than thought. The crisis has given China's leaders an opportunity to crack down on separatists with renewed ferocity. Ethnic Uygur Muslims in Xinjiang, many of whom support the establishment of an independent nation, East Turkestan, free from Beijing, have been the victims of intensifying repression. China has repeatedly insisted it has a major problem with Uygur “terrorists” in Xinjiang, whom it claims have been trained in Afghanistan. Those captured fighting for an independent Islamic state are sentenced to vile public humiliation and execution for their crime of “disturbing public order”. The treatment that they undergo is nothing but cruel, inhumane and degrading to say the least.

The Geneva Convention specifically forbids the parading of prisoners before the public. In China, Islamic prisoners are made into entertainment before their execution. They are also fed alcohol with their last meal before they die, as a final insult to their faith. On the 25th September 2001, such an incident occurred. Two prisoners, who were shot in the back of the neck, were paraded in front of the public on "Liberation Street" for a full hour before being driven off to their punishment. If that wasn't enough, in line with 'local custom', the families of the deceased can expect to receive the bullet that pierced their loved one as a warning for future generations.

This is not the first time that such barbarity has been displayed, and it will not be the last.

I urge you to investigate into the current human rights situation in Xinjiang with a view to ending the religious discrimination of the Chinese government against Muslims who wish to practice their religion. Preventing them from doing so is not acceptable or legal. Furthermore, I urge you to investigate into the Chinese Government's treatment of Islamic prisoners. The practice of torture and execution is widespread, and constitutes serious human rights abuses of cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment, which violates the right to life.

I look forward to your reply regarding this serious and unacceptable violation of human rights.

Yours sincerely
Name

UZBEKISTAN – Human Rights Abuses – Background

This short report is a summary of one given in October 2001 to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom.

The collapse of the former Soviet Union in 1992 gave the Muslims of Uzbekistan the chance to rediscover their Islamic faith, which had been discouraged under previous Communist governments. Islamic missionaries entered the country although the US government in its policies towards Uzbekistan encouraged the entry of alims from countries such as Turkey rather than Iran to help the population with its study of Islam.

Muslims constitute 90% of the population of Uzbekistan. Since 1992 Islam Karimov's government has directed its forces against the Islamic community, using the bombings in February 1999 in Tashkent to clampdown on Muslims, particularly on members of Hizb ut Tahrir. One method of propagating Hizb ut Tahrir's message is for members to distribute leaflets for example in bazaars, on public transportation, institutions and other public places. Leaflets have been handed to the mayors and governors of Tashkent, districts within Tashkent and other regions. Members who have done so have been arrested and given lengthy prison terms.

Police usually besiege houses of members, arrest and beat them in front of family members and then continue the interrogation at the police station. During the interrogation, Muslims are tortured to try and force them to give up their ideas and also to seek the mercy of Islam Karimov. Long sentences are often applied to Hizb ut Tahrir members who do not break during the interrogations.

Once inside prison the torture continues. Prison rules forbid ablution, prayer, fasting, calling other prisoners to Islam or reciting the Qu'ran. Instead religious prisoners are required to sing the national anthem and to glorify and seek forgiveness of Islam Karimov.

Jaslik concentration camp, located in the region of Karalpakistan was built in 1997. Thousands of prisoners with religious convictions began to arrive at the camp in 1998. Two further concentration camps exist near Jaslik; according to some sources between 13,000 – 15,000 prisoners are kept there. According to one prisoner, two more articles have been added to the existing ten internal rules of the prison. Before meals prisoners are made to sing the national anthem of the Karalpak Republic and after meals prisoners are made to sing the national anthem of the Republic of Uzbekistan. These anthems are made to be sung every morning aswell.

On 6 April 2000 Islam Karimov gathered together the country's well known intellectuals e.g. writers, poets, historians, mosque imams etc in order to create a new national creed for Uzbekistan. He stated, "How is it we see Hizb ut Tahrir filling the society with its ideology and especially when we know that the Wahabis and Hizb ut Tahrir are mere puppets in the hands of others?". Statistics show that Karimov has arrested more than 4000 people from Hizb ut Tahrir and thousands of other Muslims.

Uzbekistan's number of mosques increased from 86 when it was part of the USSR to 1,600 although all are run by government approved leaders. The government places agents in each mahallah, a district that ranges from 500 to 2000 people to monitor the people and watch for fundamentalists. Agents also monitor every mosque. So far agents have identified 10,700 people with Wahabi tendencies according to a government official. When asked how they are spotted he replied, "It's in their eyes. If he is a Wahabi, he is praying in a different way...Also he is inviting others to be Wahabis."

Karimov granted a general amnesty to over 10,000 prisoners to mark Uzbekistan's ninth anniversary of independence in 2001. The amnesty covered WWII veterans, children under 18, the severely disabled, those involved with cleaning up Chernobyl, women, men over 60 and foreign nationals.

However the amnesty failed to cover prisoners convicted of crimes against the Constitution or members of so-called extremist, terrorist and other illegal organisations. The Uzbek Interior Minister denied the presence of political prisoners in any of the country's jails, but stated that 75,000 prisoners are held in 47 different prisons throughout Uzbekistan.

The above information was collected and disseminated at a meeting held with the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom in October 2001. Since September 11 2001, Uzbekistan has become an ally in the United States "War Against Terrorism". It is now believed that the number of Hizb ut Tahrir members arrested since September has doubled compared to those arrested before.

Hizb ut Tahrir has published a 100 page report detailing the persecution of their members in Uzbekistan, which can be downloaded from the website www.war-against-terrorism.info

In particular the case of Farhad Usmanov has been highlighted. The son of a well known Tashkent Imam, he was arrested in June 1999 for alleged possession of a Hizb ut Tahrir leaflet. He died during pre-trial detention; although the official cause of his death was given as heart failure, photographic evidence clearly showed marks on his body consistent with torture being a likely cause of death.

In April 2002, Farhad Usmanov's widow Musharaf Usmanova, was arrested by over 50 members of the Uzbek security apparatus and detained in an unknown location for a week. Her forthcoming trial for

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