



## **Statement by Ms. Rebiya Kadeer, Uyghur democracy leader**

**European Parliament, Brussels, Belgium  
September 1, 2009**

Good morning/afternoon/evening.

Before we begin, I would like to thank the organizers. I would also like to thank everyone here today for your attendance.

Since the unrest in Urumchi on July 5, 2009, the official Chinese media, led by Xinhua news agency and Chinese Central Television, has vigorously presented to the world the Chinese government's version of events and the cause of the discontent shown by Uyghurs in the streets of East Turkestan's regional capital.

The version of the Urumchi unrest that has been presented to the world by the Chinese government follows this narrative. On July 5, Uyghur "[plotters](#)<sup>1</sup>" took to the streets and in a display of "beating, smashing, looting, and burning" killed [192 people and injured 1,721](#)<sup>2</sup>. The riot was [masterminded](#)<sup>3</sup> by me, Rebiya Kadeer, and the World Uyghur Congress (WUC). On July 19, Nur Bekri, the Chairman of what the Chinese government calls the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, [admitted](#)<sup>4</sup> that Chinese security forces used live ammunition and shot dead protestors, who were referred to as "mobsters" in the official media, to control the unrest.

This version of events, as is so often the case with Chinese reporting, is not true. For instance, we know that far more than 12 Uyghurs were shot by Chinese authorities.

The Chinese government, through its proxies in the official media, is obscuring the truth in order to conceal a mass killing of Uyghurs by Chinese security forces. Furthermore, through its demonization of Uyghur protestors in the official media, it is attempting to justify the impending mass executions of Uyghurs as promised by Chinese officials.

The actual events in Urumchi according to eyewitness reports are as follows.

In the days leading up to July 5, an unknown person or persons posted on the forums of China-based websites an appeal to Uyghurs in Urumchi to peacefully protest the Chinese government's mishandling of multiple killings of Uyghurs by Han Chinese at a toy

factory in Shaoguan, Guangdong province. The forum post surprisingly remained online, which is contrary to the known behavior of Chinese government censors.

On July 5, Uyghurs, some of whom carried the flag of the People's Republic of China, assembled and marched peacefully in Urumchi toward People's Square. They asked for justice for the victims in Shaoguan and expressed sympathy with the families of those killed and injured. They also demanded to meet with government officials but none came out to meet with them.

As the protest was public knowledge, the protestors were met en route by a show of force, including four kinds of Chinese police- regular police; anti-riot police; special police and People's Armed Police. The police surrounded the protestors and tensions between police and protestors grew. According to an eyewitness caller to our offices, the protestors were incited by plain clothes agents to respond to the police presence. As tensions became heated, police started making arrests and then under the cover of darkness, began to [fire](#)<sup>5</sup> upon the Uyghur protestors. Protestors then fled to other points of the city.

In another phone call to our offices, a protestor at Xinjiang University reported that Uyghurs were being fired upon by Chinese police "right now", and in the background we could hear the screams of people in the vicinity. The caller stated that they could see approximately 50 Uyghurs lying dead from Chinese police shooting in an area around the stop for the number 1 city bus.

On July 11, [Reuters](#)<sup>6</sup> quoted a Uyghur resident of Urumchi who said that the official death toll is "the Han people's number. We have our own number...Maybe many, many more Uighurs died. The police were scared and lost control." In that same report, Reuters also stated that "a spray of bullet holes could be seen on the glass front of a Bank of China office...Many Uighur residents say they heard or saw gunfire." That Chinese security forces used live ammunition in suppressing the protest was confirmed in several calls to our office received on Sunday night from protest participants.

Some Uyghurs reacted to the intimidation of Chinese policing. Uyghurs killed and injured Han Chinese in violent attacks. Here, I would like to say that I strongly condemn the violence which took place in Urumchi.

In the immediate aftermath of the violence, Chinese security forces conducted mass-arrests of Uyghurs, according to sources quoted by Radio Free Asia in a July 9 [report](#)<sup>7</sup>. A caller to our offices stated that the dormitories at Xinjiang University were broken into by Chinese police in a bid to arrest Uyghurs deemed to have been involved in the unrest. In a Xinhua [report](#)<sup>8</sup> dated July 7, Urumchi Communist Party secretary, Li Zhi, was quoted as saying that authorities had detained 1,434 people for their role in the Urumchi unrest. The World Uyghur Congress contests that number, as it has not been independently verified. A July 19 Financial Times [report](#)<sup>9</sup> states that more than 4,000 Uyghurs have been arrested and that Urumchi's prisons are so full that detainees are being held in People's Liberation

Army warehouses. We fear that these detainees face execution in non-transparent judicial procedures.

These reports remain unconfirmed due to the information blackout, which remains in place in East Turkestan, affecting internet and wireless communications.

In further communications with our offices, Uyghurs reported that some of the Uyghur wounded from July 5 did not go to the hospital for fear of arrest. Those who did go to the hospital reported that they were charged for treatment, while Han Chinese victims received assistance free of charge.

On July 6-7, 3,000 to 4,000 armed Han Chinese took to the streets attacking and killing Uyghurs. Radio Free Asia [reports](#)<sup>10</sup> an eyewitness as seeing 150 to 200 dead Uyghurs in the Hualin district. There have been no reported arrests of Han Chinese from these two days of violence against the Uyghur community in Urumchi. Radio Free Asia [reported](#)<sup>11</sup> a Uyghur man as saying that “[w]hen the Chinese came out with batons and clubs, there is no one to stop them. They are pretending to stop them, but they are not really strict... If the Uyghurs had come out with batons and clubs, they would immediately be fired upon.”

In a further act of heavy handed policing, on July 13 [reports](#)<sup>12</sup> detailed the fatal shooting by Chinese armed police of two Uyghurs.

The Chinese government’s [crackdown](#)<sup>13</sup> on ordinary Uyghurs in East Turkestan is in full swing. A Financial Times [report](#)<sup>14</sup> states that the number of armed police in the region would be raised to 130,000 by October 1, 2009, the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China.

The Chinese government has been vocal about the fact that it allowed the western media into Urumchi to confirm its version of events in order to create a veneer of legitimacy. This is most certainly a change of policy from the ban it imposed on foreign journalists during the March 2008 unrest in Lhasa. However, scratching below the surface, a careful media management strategy is evident. Through this strategy the Chinese government is attempting to conceal the events surrounding the Urumchi unrest, as it is the events surrounding the Shaoguan killings, which precipitated the Urumchi protests. Nevertheless details of those two events have filtered through Chinese censors to present a picture far different than that reported by the official media.

The official Chinese media [reports](#)<sup>15</sup> that two Uyghurs were killed during the Han Chinese mob attack at the toy factory in Shaoguan on June 26.

This is not true.

In the U.K. Guardian newspaper, Jonathan Watts [reports](#)<sup>16</sup> an interview with a Han Chinese man involved in the Shaoguan killings, who states that he personally “helped to kill seven or eight Uighurs, battering them until they stopped screaming.” The eyewitness

added that the death toll could be around 30, a figure which tallies with reports we have received from workers at the toy factory who have been brave enough to call us.

In a Far Eastern Economic Review piece titled [Fear Grips Shaoguan's Uyghurs](#)<sup>17</sup>, Kathleen E. McLaughlin reports that 700 Uyghurs from the Shaoguan toy factory are now being detained at an abandoned factory ten miles away. The official Chinese media is not reporting this because, as eyewitness accounts testify, the version of events at Shaoguan it has given the world is false. The unlawful detention of these workers illustrates that if the real details of the Shaoguan killings emerge, they will reveal the unwillingness of the Chinese authorities to protect Uyghur citizens from Han Chinese mob violence.

In the wake of the unrest, internet and wireless communications went [down](#)<sup>18</sup> in Urumchi, and in the region. This was for a very good reason – to prevent an Iranian style spread of news from citizen journalists.

The Chinese authorities' deep fear that that a different version of events will emerge from the one reported in the official media has spread to a threat issued to the legal community. According to the [Congressional-Executive Commission on China](#)<sup>19</sup> (CECC), the [Beijing Municipal Judicial Bureau](#)<sup>20</sup> “issued a notice on its Web site on July 8 calling on justice bureaus, the municipal lawyers association, and law offices in Beijing to ‘exercise caution’ in representing cases related to events” in East Turkestan.

The Chinese reporting on the Urumchi unrest has also not given any prominence to the involvement of key government officials in exacerbating disharmony between Han Chinese and Uyghurs.

However, Xinhua did find it reasonable to [report](#)<sup>21</sup> Li Zhi's inflammatory chanting of “Down with Rebiya”, at the scene of the unrest, further fanning the flames of Han Chinese nationalism and dividing Uyghurs and Han Chinese. Indeed, official comments have taken on an even more hyperbolic nature, as the China Daily [charges](#)<sup>22</sup> that the Urumchi unrest can be linked to Al-Qaeda.

The state-controlled China Daily indicated in a report issued on August 24, 2009 that trials of more than 200 people detained over the unrest in East Turkestan's regional capital of Urumchi would begin this week. The report, later withdrawn from the China Daily's website, contained a number of specifics on aspects of the cases; however, in a statement, Li Hua, an official from the regional government's press office, [said](#)<sup>23</sup> that no dates have been arranged for the trials. Mr. Li added that the number of trials is set at 83 and not at 200 as stated by the China Daily. The WUC asserts that these contradictions only increase the skepticism with which these trials should be viewed by the international community.

Many of the details on the criminal and judicial procedures in the cases as reported by the China Daily are contested in reports emerging from East Turkestan, adding to grave doubts regarding the divergent official accounts of detentions and impending trials.

Further unconfirmed information received by the WUC also indicates that Uyghur detainees have received severe beatings at the hands of Chinese penal authorities, which have in some cases resulted in [deaths](#)<sup>24</sup>. The information source added that there were instances of Uyghur detainees who had received beatings so severe while in detention that after their release they had died as a result of their injuries. Family members of Uyghur detainees have not been able to confirm if their relatives are still alive as Chinese authorities, in contravention of Chinese law, are not disclosing the location of Uyghurs in detention. The WUC believes that the beatings point to a well-documented Chinese government use of torture to extract confessions and that the 3,318 items of evidence gathered by Chinese police to support any confessions must be brought into question.

The WUC is also concerned that the outcome of these trials have been determined before their commencement, and serve as a Chinese government tool to intimidate Uyghurs and eliminate peaceful Uyghur dissent. The WUC contends that Chinese Communist Party politicians and not the legal system have laid the groundwork for the outcome of these trials through their public comments on the severity with which punishment should be dispensed. At a press [conference](#)<sup>25</sup> on July 8, 2009, Urumchi Communist Party Secretary Li Zhi indicated the planned use of capital punishment against those convicted of the most serious offenses by stating “[t]o those who have committed crimes with cruel means, we will execute them.”

In addition, the assignment of lawyers by Chinese authorities to the accused as reported by the China Daily indicates that death sentences may have been determined before any trial begins. A 2006 [study](#)<sup>26</sup> conducted by the Great Britain China Center, the Chinese Academy for Social Sciences and the Max Planck Institute for Foreign and International Criminal Law found that “[t]he defence council is assigned to a case rather late in criminal proceedings. In general, assignment takes place after the defendant has confessed and after investigation has been finalized. Capital cases are processed rapidly through the criminal justice system, leaving not much room for unfolding effective criminal defence. Death penalty proceedings are carried out at a rapid pace.”

The WUC has also learned from unconfirmed reports that executions of Uyghurs have already taken place. According to the information source, summary trials and executions of Uyghur ‘masterminds’ of the events in Urumchi were conducted by Chinese authorities in swift retribution for the unrest. The trials and executions took place on July 8 and 9, 2009, two days after the unrest began, when residents of Urumchi were compelled to remain inside their homes by Chinese authorities.

Chinese officials have accused the World Uyghur Congress, and, as I stated earlier, have especially singled me out, for [fomenting](#)<sup>27</sup> the unrest in Urumchi. This pointing of fingers at everyone but themselves is not a new strategy for Beijing. In March 2008, Chinese officials [blamed](#)<sup>28</sup> His Holiness the Dalai Lama for the unrest in Lhasa; similarly, it has blamed me for organizing the unrest in Urumchi. I have publicly stated on numerous occasions that I am not responsible for the unrest in Urumchi. I feel pained by the loss of

so many lives, Han Chinese and Uyghur, and condemn the violence which took place in Urumchi.

The real context for the unrest is six decades of repressive policies by a Chinese Communist administration which has long sought to dilute Uyghur identity.

From the purges of East Turkestan nationalists in the Anti-Rightist Campaign of the late fifties, to the starvation, exile and destruction of the Great Leap Forward (1958–1962) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), Uyghurs, along with millions of other victims, were persecuted by the Chinese Communist Party. However, Uyghurs were also subjected to special campaigns specifically directed at them so as to dilute their distinct identity. In the early sixties, the Chinese Communist administration instigated a forced resettlement policy with the aims of dispersing concentrations of Uyghurs and of isolating Uyghurs from their communities. In 1961, my family fell victim to this policy. We were forced to leave our home and to relocate far from our friends and our relations.

Currently, the Chinese government's intensified repressive policies aimed at the eradication of the Uyghur identity include the [forced transfer](#)<sup>29</sup> of young Uyghur women to Chinese sweatshops; the [demolition](#)<sup>30</sup> of Uyghur cultural heritage in Kashgar; a [monolingual](#)<sup>31</sup> language-planning policy; [discriminatory](#)<sup>32</sup> hiring practices and [curbs](#)<sup>33</sup> on freedom of religion. These policies illustrate that Chinese authorities do not value the traditions, customs and culture of the Uyghur and therefore do not consider Uyghurs their equal.

The indiscriminate killing of Uyghur protestors in Urumchi is consistent with systematic political, economic, social and cultural human rights abuses from a government obsessed with the maintenance of its control of a strategic and resource rich area.

At this point, the Chinese government needs to conduct a rigorous self-examination of its performance in East Turkestan, as well as to come clean about Shaoguan and Urumchi.

If we have learnt one thing from the unrest in Urumchi this July and in Tibet in March, 2008, as well as the sixty years of repression which preceded them it is that the Chinese government is out of policy ideas in addressing the increasing marginalization of non-Han Chinese people in China, besides endless rounds of crackdowns and “Strike Hard” campaigns.

It is time for the Chinese government to sit and talk with me, His Holiness the Dalai Lama and all those leaders of non-Han Chinese communities who have been vilified, imprisoned and slandered just because we happen to disagree with a bankrupt official policy.

In 1979, the Chinese government made a bold move and began a process of economic reform, which helped maintain its grip on power. The Chinese government now needs to make an even bolder move and enact political reform toward all people in the PRC, but especially toward non-Han Chinese people, who have largely missed out on the benefits

of economic reform, to maintain any semblance of legitimacy beyond its status as the world's creditor.

This call for political reform toward non-Han Chinese people also has the support of Han Chinese. Signatories of "[Charter 08](#)<sup>34</sup>", a manifesto for political reform drafted by prominent and ordinary Chinese citizens, asked from the government for "an institutional design to promote the mutual prospects of all ethnicities". In addition, Wang Yang, a top Chinese Communist Party official in Guangdong, has [stressed](#)<sup>35</sup> the need for "adjustments" to the Chinese government's policies toward non Han Chinese people, and added that if this process was not carried out then "there will be some problems."

In order for any future political reform process to have validity, the Chinese government must engage in a genuine and transparent dialogue with non-Han Chinese people built on a foundation of trust and equality.

Mao Zedong said that political power comes from the barrel of a gun, but I say that political reform comes from the table of peaceful negotiation. However, the promise of dialogue between the Chinese government and the Uyghur people based on the principles of trust and equality looks ever more distant as the Chinese government continues in its divisive invective against the Uyghur people since the unrest in Urumchi.

I am ready to discuss with the Chinese government the ways in which we can address its policy failures of the past sixty years and seek political reform.

The Chinese government should first of allow an independent and international investigation into the Shaoguan killings and into the Urumchi unrest. Let the world understand the real events. The streets of cities in East Turkestan are littered with closed-circuit television. The tapes from cameras on the streets of Urumchi during the unrest should be made freely available to western journalists. If the truth were to emerge, this would surely contribute to a path of dialogue between Han Chinese and Uyghur based on equality and trust.

I also urge the Chinese government to allow journalists access to East Turkestan and Uyghurs without any conditions. It is well-known that Uyghurs who speak to western journalists often disappear. No one knows the whereabouts of [Dilkex Tiliwaldi](#)<sup>36</sup>, a Uyghur who disappeared after speaking to a PBS journalist several years ago.

This access to East Turkestan will be critical in the coming days as looming executions of Uyghurs on political charges come ever nearer (see CECC's [Authorities Pledge Crackdown Following Xinjiang Demonstration and Clashes](#)<sup>37</sup>). We fear that a number of Uyghurs are going to be executed unnoticed by the world. In order to prevent such state-sanctioned killing we require the eyes of the world's media and the world's governments to remain on East Turkestan and to speak out against a further abuse of the Uyghur people's human rights.

The Chinese government should respect its own [constitution](#)<sup>38</sup> and [Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law](#)<sup>39</sup> and grant Uyghurs genuine religious freedom, economic opportunity, cultural rights, freedom of speech and the rule of law.

I believe the Chinese government should end its aggressive policy of monolingual education, and give students and their parents a choice about their language of instruction. Chinese government policies ensuring equal employment opportunities for Uyghurs should be implemented, in which employment inside of East Turkestan is available to Uyghurs, instead of just sending them outside of East Turkestan to work. All Uyghurs should be allowed to attend the mosque without fear of suspicion and imams should be allowed to speak freely. The Chinese government should stop imprisoning peaceful dissenters and make them partners in a robust dialogue on the development of the region. Uyghurs will welcome these policies, and they will help to reduce tensions between Uyghurs and Han Chinese.

The government must end policies diluting Uyghur culture and must stop distorting our history. These are policies aimed to assimilate Uyghurs and show no regard for our distinct identity as a people. The government should stop its cultural genocide of the Uyghur people.

The time has come for the Chinese government to reform its failed policies, not only in East Turkestan and Tibet, but also in all of China. The time has come for China to embrace human rights, freedom and democracy, and become a respected member of the international community. Uyghurs, Tibetan, Chinese and all ethnic groups in China have suffered too long under the Chinese Communist Party administration's repressive policies. The time has come for healing and reconciliation.

President Hu Jintao, you can become the greatest Chinese president in five thousand years of Chinese history if you take a bold, righteous and historic stand towards creating a liberal, tolerant and modern China by talking with leaders of China's marginalized communities. I ask you not to go down in the history of China and the world as one of its greatest dictators.

As Mahatma Gandhi said "Your values become your destiny".

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.legaldaily.com.cn/0801/2009-07/11/content\\_1121455.htm](http://www.legaldaily.com.cn/0801/2009-07/11/content_1121455.htm)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.seattlepi.com/national/1104ap\\_as\\_china\\_protest.html](http://www.seattlepi.com/national/1104ap_as_china_protest.html)

<sup>3</sup> [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-07/10/content\\_11688780.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-07/10/content_11688780.htm)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/07/19/china.uyghur.threats/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.cecc.gov/pages/virtualAcad/index.php?id125582>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/SP463729.htm>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/clampdown-07092009101424.html>

<sup>8</sup> [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-07/07/content\\_11666945.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-07/07/content_11666945.htm)

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/5aa932ee-747c-11de-8ad5-00144feabdc0.html?nclink\\_check=1](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/5aa932ee-747c-11de-8ad5-00144feabdc0.html?nclink_check=1)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/witnesses-07172009121028.html>

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