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Notice: Undefined index: et_template in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1216

CHINA: Five Uyghur women sentenced to long prison terms in China's Xinjiang

Five women from Uyghur family sentenced to long prison terms in China's Xinjiang

A record of the verdict says the women were imprisoned for 'illegal' religious activities.

By Shohret Hoshur

Radio Free Asia (21.01.2022) – <https://bit.ly/3nUQiAK> – A court in Xinjiang sentenced five Muslim Uyghur women from one family to lengthy jail terms for “illegal” religious activities, according to a copy of the 2019 verdict recently obtained by RFA.

The women – an elderly mother, her three daughters, and her daughter-in-law – received jail terms of between seven and 20 years, according to the document from the Korla (in Chinese, Kuerle) Municipal People’s Court. Korla is the second-largest city in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

Halcham Pazil, Melikizat Memet, Patigul Memet, Zemire Memet and Bostan Ibrahim, were convicted of “disturbing public order and inciting ethnic hatred” for “hearing and providing a venue for illegal religious preaching,” according to the document.

The eldest of the five Uyghur women, Halcham Pazil, is 78 years old, and the youngest, Bostan Ibrahim, is 33. Four of the women are housewives and one is a civil servant.

The verdict issued on April 2, 2019, indicates that the charges against them were brought by the Korla Municipal Procuratorate.

The verdict also mentions an imprisoned woman named Kadirye Memet, adding that her case would be dealt with separately.

Halchigul Memet, whom the document says led the women in religious discussions and is now living in exile, said Kadirye is a relative of the other five.

Chief Judge Shirali Memet, Judge Ahmetjan Kurban, Judge Ibadet Yasin and registrar Dilmurat Parhat signed the sentencing document. An official from the Korla Municipal Court declined to answer questions about the case.

“Why do you want to know about our judge? What government department are you calling from?” he asked.

The official told the RFA reporter that an officer from the local police department would contact him, but no one did. Another official confirmed that chief judge and other two judges who had signed the verdict were still working at the same court.

Halchigul Memet, mentioned in the verdict as having led the five women during the religious gatherings, told RFA she was related to the five imprisoned women.

“We were all relatives. I mean they were all direct relatives, and I was like a relative to them and them to me,” she told RFA from Turkey.

The women followed traditional Uyghur customs and frequently visited each other to talk about their children and to practice their religion, Halchigul said.

“We used to go to each household regularly on weekly or biweekly basis,” she said. “We would talk about how to improve our quality of life and help sharpen our religious knowledge.

“We never had any political or anti-government talks,” she said. “We only talked about how to improve our well-being and our family’s well-being and how to be traditionally good Muslims.”

The prosecution and jailing of the five women for holding traditional religious gatherings is proof of the Chinese government’s genocidal policies against Uyghurs, Halchigul said.

She said the other women arrested – Kadirye Memet – was also a member of the family of five women named in the verdict, she said.

Halchigul said that three other members of the same family – Mahmut and Musajan Memet, and Zohragul Hudaberdi, who married into the family – also had been sentenced to prison, bringing

the total number of imprisoned relatives to nine.

“The Chinese government cracked down on this kind of simple gathering as a ‘crime’ against the country,” Halchigul said. “They were seven siblings from this family, and all were detained and imprisoned, even the family’s in-laws were imprisoned. It was devastating to the entire family.”

Translated by RFA’s Uyghur Service. Written in English by Roseanne Gerin.

Photo : A Uyghur woman holds a placard as she demonstrates to ask for news of her relatives in northwestern China’s Xinjiang region and to express concern about an extradition treaty between China and Turkey, near the Chinese consulate in Istanbul, Turkey, March 8, 2021 – AFP

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