

CHINA: Xinjiang authorities sentence Uyghur philanthropist to death for unsanctioned Hajj

Abdughapar Abdurusul's wife is believed to have died in detention and his eldest son is missing.

Radio Free Asia (21.11.2018) – <https://bit.ly/2PuDuw0> – Authorities in northwest China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) have sentenced a prominent Uyghur businessman and philanthropist to death for taking an unsanctioned Muslim holy pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia, according to his brother.

Abdughapar Abdurusul, of Bakyol district in Ili Kazakh (in Chinese, Yili Hasake) Autonomous Prefecture's Ghulja (Yining) city, "was arrested in July or August," his brother Abdusattar Abdurusul recently told RFA's Uyghur Service, citing Abdughapar's Kazakh business partners living in Kazakhstan's Almaty city.

"The latest I heard is that my brother has been given a death sentence and he is waiting for his execution to be carried out ... The reason is that he went to perform hajj on his own [instead of joining a state-sanctioned tour group]," he added, referring to the annual Muslim holy pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia.

According to Abdusattar Abdurusul, his brother was provided with “no lawyer” during a “group trial,” suggesting he had been illegally sentenced to death. All death sentences should be reviewed by China’s Supreme Court in Beijing, but it is unclear whether Abdughapar Abdurusul’s case has been examined.

Abdughapar Abdurusul, a 42-year-old father of four, owns several shops and businesses, and multiple properties, his brother said, and had used some of the money he earned to build a mosque for the local community in recent years.

Abdughapar Abdurusul had also sold an old family home for around 1 million yuan (U.S. \$144,000) in April or May, and was living comfortably before he was arrested and all of his family’s assets—totaling around 100 million yuan (U.S. \$14.4 million)—were seized, he said.

“He is a philanthropist who enjoyed helping society ... [but] now the government has taken away everything and destroyed his family’s lives completely,” Abdusattar Abdurusul said.

Abdughapar Abdurusul’s eldest son Awzer was detained in 2017 after returning home from studying in Turkey, and his wife Merhaba Hajim was taken into custody in April this year, he added.

Abdusattar Abdurusul said his sister Sayipjamal has been missing for “a long time” and is thought to also have been detained, while several of Abdughapar Abdurusul’s friends “have been sentenced to more than 18 years in prison.”

Death in custody

Staff members at the Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture's Public Security Bureau and local police stations in Ghulja city refused to answer questions or hung up the phone when contacted by RFA about Abdughapar Abdurusul's case.

But a long-time associate who worked with Abdughapar Abdurusul in Ili Kazakh's Qorghas (Huocheng) county and is now living in exile told RFA he had also heard of the businessman's sentence from local sources, and that his wife had died in custody.

"A friend of mine called me, saying that our mutual friend Abdughapar Hajim had been sentenced to death," the associate said, speaking on condition of anonymity and using an honorific title to denote that Abdughapar Abdurusul had completed a pilgrimage to Mecca.

"[I also heard] that his wife had already died in prison," he added.

The associate said that "more than 50" people in Abdughapar Abdurusul's circle of friends—including several police officers—had been arrested and imprisoned before him, but that he was the only to have been sentenced to death.

When asked why Abdughapar Abdurusul might have been given such

a harsh sentence, the associate said he was unsure, “but the Chinese government is killing Uyghurs for no particular reason.”

A former close neighbor of Abdughapar Abdurusul’s named Turghunay, who is now living in exile in Turkey, also told RFA she had heard of his sentence and that Merhaba Hajim had died in detention.

“I heard that Abdughapar Hajim was arrested in May or June and, prior to that, his eldest son Awzer had been arrested, followed by his wife, Merhaba Hajim,” she said.

“I don’t know if he was arrested because of his wealth or having gone on hajj, but when I heard the news about his death sentence ... I was devastated.”

Turghunay said that Merhaba Hajim had “died in a [political] re-education camp,” where authorities have detained Uyghurs accused of harboring “strong religious views” and “politically incorrect” ideas throughout the XUAR since April 2017.

“The death certificate was given to the family by the authorities,” she said, adding that “no one knows what has happened to their young children.”

Camp network

While Beijing initially denied the existence of re-education camps, the Uyghur chairman of Xinjiang's provincial government, Shohrat Zakir, told China's official Xinhua news agency last month that the facilities are an effective tool to protect the country from terrorism and provide vocational training for Uyghurs.

Reporting by RFA's Uyghur Service and other media organizations, however, has shown that those in the camps are detained against their will and subjected to political indoctrination, routinely face rough treatment at the hands of their overseers, and endure poor diets and unhygienic conditions in the often overcrowded facilities.

Adrian Zenz, a lecturer in social research methods at the Germany-based European School of Culture and Theology, has said that some 1.1 million people are or have been detained in the camps—equating to 10 to 11 percent of the adult Muslim population of the XUAR.

U.S. State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert recently said the U.S. government was “deeply troubled” by the crackdown on Uyghurs, while U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley described it last month as “the largest internment of civilians in the world today” and “straight out of George Orwell,” during a speech at the Chiefs of Defense Conference Dinner in Washington.

Reported by Gulchehra Hoja for RFA's Uyghur Service. Translated by RFA's Uyghur Service. Written in English by Joshua Lipes.

.....
If you want to be regularly informed about different violations of human rights in the world, [click here](#) for a free subscription to our newsletters!

Also:

HRWF database of news and information on over 70 countries: <http://hrwf.eu/newsletters/forb/>

List of hundreds of documented cases of believers of various faiths in 20 countries: <http://hrwf.eu/forb/forb-and-blasphemy-prisoners-list/>

EGYPT: Military court sentences 17 people to death for the attack on Coptic churches

Sentenced another 19 defendants to life imprisonment or several years in prison. For the judges they are guilty of membership of the Islamic State. Activists and NGOs against the trial in a military court. "Horrible" attacks, but an "unjust" proceeding do not guarantee justice.

AsiaNews (12.10.2018) – <https://bit.ly/2CIRgdl> – Cairo – A military court in Egypt has sentenced to death 17 people, held

responsible for a series of attacks against some Coptic Christian churches in the country, which caused dozens of victims and wounded between 2016 and 2017 in the Cairo, Alexandria and Tanta.

According to Mena State Agency, in the context of criminal proceedings another 19 defendants were sentenced to life imprisonment or sentences between 10 and 15 years in prison.

The Islamic State (IS, ex Isis) had claimed responsibility for the attacks, pointing out that the suicide bombers and assailants who blew themselves up inside the churches were militants or affiliated to the jihadist group.

The cases that were the object of the trial concerned in particular the attacks against three Christian places of worship: the Coptic Orthodox church of Saint Peter's in the Abaseya district in Cairo, which caused 29 victims; the bombings of April 2017 at Coptic churches in Tanta and Alessandria, where 45 people died.

Anonymous sources of the Egyptian magistracy report that the condemned were also found guilty of membership of the Islamic State; some of them also for an attack launched on January 16 last year against a police checkpoint in Naqab, a desert area in the south-west of Egypt.

During the initial stages of the trial, the Minister of Justice Nabil Sadeq had requested the referral of the 48 defendants to the military court, on charges of having created

terrorist cells in the governorates of Cairo and Mena. A choice criticized by some activists and NGOs, who judge the whole process “unjust”.

There is no doubt that the defendants have committed “horrible crimes,” Amnesty International says in a statement, but the death sentence at the conclusion of an “unjust military trial” does not do justice. They deserved a “civil proceeding”.

In a nation of almost 95 million people with a large Muslim majority, Coptic Christians are a substantial minority of around 10% of the total population. Between 2016 and 2017 the Land of the Pharaohs recorded a series of bloody attacks, which involved the Christian community itself.

The escalation of violence led to fears of the cancellation of Pope Francis’ Apostolic journey to Egypt, April last year. However, the pontiff respected the program by meeting the president of the Republic, the great imam of al-Azhar and celebrating mass in front of tens of thousands of faithful.

.....

If you want to be regularly informed about different violations of human rights in the world, [click here](#) for a free subscription to our newsletters!

Also:

**HRWF database of news and information on over 70 countries: <http://hrwf.eu/newsletters/forb/>
List of hundreds of documented cases of believers of various**

Mauritania blogger sentenced to death is released on appeal

The Washington Post (09.11.2017) – <http://wapo.st/2Aimfvy> – An appeals court in Mauritania has released a blogger who had been sentenced to death for an online post deemed blasphemous by authorities.

The court in Nouadhibou city on Thursday sentenced Mohamed Cheikh Ould Mkhaitir to two years in prison and a fine. He has already served nearly four years, so he was released.

Mkhaitir was arrested in January 2014 and charged with apostasy over a Facebook post that condemned the use of religion to justify discrimination against his caste.

It was the first death sentence handed down for apostasy in Mauritania since the African nation's independence in 1960.

Amnesty International welcomed the new ruling and called on authorities to ensure that he lives without threat of physical

attack.

.....
If you want to be regularly informed about different violations of human rights in the world, [click here](#) for a free subscription to our newsletters!

Also:

HRWF database of news and information on over 70 countries: <http://hrwf.eu/newsletters/forb/>

List of hundreds of documented cases of believers of various faiths in 20 countries: <http://hrwf.eu/forb/forb-and-blasphemy-prisoners-list/>

PAKISTAN: Pakistan asks Facebook and Twitter to help identify blasphemers

Companies approached in effort to locate Pakistanis at home or abroad so they can be prosecuted or potentially extradited

By Alex Hern and agencies

The Guardian (17.03.2017) – <http://bit.ly/2n6nJBy> – Pakistan has asked Facebook and Twitter to help identify Pakistanis suspected of blasphemy so it can prosecute them or pursue their extradition.

Under the country's strict blasphemy laws, anyone found to have insulted Islam or the prophet Muhammad can be sentenced to death.

The interior minister, Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, said an official in Pakistan's Washington embassy had approached the two social media companies in an effort to identify Pakistanis, either within the country or abroad, who recently shared material deemed offensive to Islam.

He said Pakistani authorities had identified 11 people for questioning over alleged blasphemy and would seek the extradition of anyone living abroad.

Facebook said it reviews all government requests carefully, "with the goal of protecting the privacy and rights of our users".

"We disclose information about accounts solely in accordance with our terms of service and applicable law. A mutual legal assistance treaty or other formal request may be required for international requests, and we include these in our government requests report," which is publicised each year, it said in a statement.

Facebook has often struggled to deal with the varying cultural norms around censorship in the hundred-plus countries where it operates. In a sprawling manifesto released in February, the company's chief executive, Mark Zuckerberg, described one possible solution to the difficulty: "combine creating a large-scale democratic process to determine standards with AI to help enforce them".

In that plan, Zuckerberg said, Facebook would ask users all over the world to vote on what sort of content they found acceptable to see on their social media feeds. Content which breached those personal and national standards would then be automatically flagged by an artificial intelligence, and removed without the need for human intervention.

Twitter declined to comment.

.....
If you want to be regularly informed about different violations of human rights in the world, [click here](#) for a free subscription to our newsletters!

Also:

HRWF database of news and information on over 70 countries: <http://hrwf.eu/newsletters/forb/>

List of hundreds of documented cases of believers of various faiths in 20 countries: <http://hrwf.eu/forb/forb-and-blasphemy-prisoners-list/>

MOROCCO: Apostasy no longer punishable by death?

Researchers found out it is not a fatwa but only the opinion of several ulemas

HRWF (20.02.2017) – We recently reported some information published by *Christian Today* (but also by *La Croix* and other Catholic media) according to which the High Religious Committee of Morocco had retracted a previous ruling making apostasy from Islam punishable by death and had said that Muslims may now change their religion.

This information is however questioned by the website <http://www.yabiladi.com>. The Superior Council of the Ulemas in Morocco has not changed its position on apostasy, according to the website yabiladi.com (<http://bit.ly/2m0rbxZ>).

The original source of this news had been *Morocco World News* which published an article on 6th February entitled “Morocco’s High Religious Committee Says Apostates Should Not Be Killed” (<http://bit.ly/2lyRH0f>) in which a document titled “The Way of the Scholars” had been distributed on the occasion of a recent ordinary session of the Council (See below). Upstream, another source was identified by *Alyaoum 24* as being the website of *Islam Maghribi* which covers news on Islam in Morocco. *Islam Maghribi* said on 4th February that the Superior Council of the Ulemas had allegedly changed its position on apostasy but it was to be taken “for what it is worth”. Indeed, it argued that “The Way of the Scholars” was only the opinion of a number of ulemas, was not a fatwa and was distributed in the margins of the ordinary session. *Islam Maghribi* also quotes **Mohamed Yssef**, secretary general of the Council, who would have clarified that it is not an official document of the Council but the expression of opinions and several scenarios raised during the work of the members of the Council. » See hereafter the wrong news that was referred to by the international media.

Wrong News: Morocco’s High Religious Committee Says Apostates Should Not Be Killed

Casablanca (6 February 2017) – ***Morocco’s High Religious Committee has retracted its Islamic ruling stating that apostasy is punishable by death and has decided to permit***

Muslims to change their religion.

The High Religious Committee in charge of issuing Fatwas (Islamic rulings) released a book in 2012 where it articulated its position on apostasy and argued that a Muslim who changes his or her religion should be punished with death, drawing on a widespread jurisprudence tradition.

Recently, however, the same entity issued a document titled "The Way of the Scholars," in which it backtracked on its position of killing apostates. Instead, it redefined apostasy not as a religious issue but as a political stand more closely aligned with "high treason."

The view that the apostate should not be killed in Islam is not a new one and can be found in the teachings of Sufyan al-Thawri in the first century AH. The scholar reviewed historical situations where the prophet Mohammed acted on the ruling, as opposed to the times he did not order the killing of the apostates. He concluded that killings occurred for political purposes and were not decisions based on religion. The apostates could, theoretically, disclose the secrets of the then fragile Islamic nation.

The reasons behind Morocco's High Religious Committee's change in position are not different from those advocated by Sufyan al-Thawri. Their newly released statement says:

"The most accurate understanding, and the most consistent with the Islamic legislation and the practical way of the Prophet,

peace be upon him, is that the killing of the apostate is meant for the traitor of the group, the one disclosing secrets, [...] the equivalent of treason in international law.”

The High Religious Committee presented the Prophet’s statement that “whoever changes his religion, kill him” in the light of his explanation “the one who leaves his religion and abandons his people.” The statement further explains that, at the time of continuous wars against the Islamic revolution in Arabia, apostates represented the threat of disclosing the secrets of new Ummah to its many enemies.

The document went on to explain that during the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah, Prophet Mohammed himself observed the provisions stating that whomever became a Muslim and renounced it must be allowed to return to Quraich, the Muslim nations’ most powerful enemy at the time. When a Bedouin decided to leave Islam after the Treaty, therefore, the prophet simply let him go.

Using Islam’s primary source of legislation, the High Religious Committee stated that the Quran talks in many instances about apostasy and its punishment in the hereafter, without mentioning any punishment in this life as in Chapter 2 verse 217 that says: “And whoever of you reverts from his religion [to disbelief] and dies while he is a disbeliever – for those, their deeds have become worthless in this world and the Hereafter, and those are the companions of the Fire, they will abide therein eternally.”

The document also explained that the famous Wars of Apostasy

launched by Abu Bakr as-Siddiq, the Muslims world's first Caliph, were in line with his effort to keep the newly established state together and fight all sorts of internal divisions. This was a decision based on political reasoning rather than by religious motivations.

.....

If you want to be regularly informed about different violations of human rights in the world, [click here](#) for a free subscription to our newsletters!

Also:

HRWF database of news and information on over 70 countries: <http://hrwf.eu/newsletters/forb/>

List of hundreds of documented cases of believers of various faiths in 20 countries: <http://hrwf.eu/forb/forb-and-blasphemy-prisoners-list/>