

**Testimony submitted to  
The Congressional-Executive Commission on China**

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Chairman Christopher Smith, Co-chairman Marco Rubio and Commission Members, thank you for inviting me to testify this afternoon at today's hearing, "Urging China's President Xi Jinping to Stop State-Sponsored Human Rights Abuses." I am a U.S. citizen, a resident of the Commonwealth of Virginia, and a journalist for Radio Free Asia, a private, nonprofit corporation that broadcasts news and information to listeners in Asian countries where full, accurate, and timely news reports are unavailable, including China.

I came to the United States in 1999, almost five years after leaving my homeland in China's far western Uyghur region in 1994. The journey that took me away from my family did not begin by choice. I left to escape the wrath of local Chinese authorities who deemed two of my writings for local Uyghur-language newspapers as subversive. I was a journalist for Qorghas Radio and Television, a local media outlet in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, when I decided to write two pieces about Beijing's harsh oppression of Uyghurs.

The choice I made then, upon leaving China, as now, was to never give up being a reporter covering the XUAR. To give that up would mean that a remote part of the world and its people – the Uyghurs – would lose one of their only lifelines to reliable news and information about what's happening in their own neighborhoods and communities. When I began working for Radio Free Asia in 2007, it was a great opportunity to continue work that is badly needed. But it was also an opportunity seized by Chinese authorities as they began to harass my family. At first it was questions for my brothers, my sister, and my mother, asking them about my whereabouts after I left. But as my reports for RFA began to be heard by Uyghurs listening on shortwave radio and reading my stories on the web, authorities wasted little time in making it clear to my family – and to me – that they would one day pay a price for my journalism.

In September 2009, following the broadcast of my report on the death of a jailed Uyghur torture victim, local authorities from my native Qorghas County visited my family in person. They forced my brothers to call me and demand that I leave my job at RFA. They told them that if I continued my work, they were in danger. In 2009, authorities linked my report on a violent incident between migrant ethnic Uyghurs and Han Chinese at a factory in Shaoguan to the unrest that erupted in July in the XUAR capitol city of Urumqi, which became known as the Urumqi Uprising.

For the next several years, as China ramped up its security clampdown in Xinjiang, violence intensified and grew more frequent. But China's state-controlled media rarely reported on these deadly incidents. Radio Free Asia disclosed the majority, often through my reports.

The threats -- against my family, and, by way of my family, me -- became more frequent and grave during this period. They culminated last year when all three of my brothers were jailed. My younger brother Tudaxun was detained in April before being tried in court and sentenced to five years in prison. He was

charged with “endangering state security.” My two other brothers, Rexim and Shawket, talked with me about Tudaxun’s situation on the phone in June. I tried to comfort them when they grew understandably emotional. I told them that in time, the situation might improve. The next month, in July, a Chinese daily newspaper *The Global Times* ran a story attacking Radio Free Asia for its coverage of violence in Xinjiang. Though I wasn’t named, the article cited my June phone call with my brothers, which had been intercepted by state surveillance.

In August 2014, local authorities also detained Rexim and Shawket. Their families have not seen them since. They were later charged with “leaking state secrets” -- I believe largely in connection with that phone call with me in June. They were also charged with “endangering state security.” When it became clear that the authorities were not going to release them, I reached out with the help of RFA to the Committee to Protect Journalists, which issued a press release about my brothers’ situation in January 2015. The case received wide attention in global media and interest here from the U.S. government. Their families and my sister were informed of their cases being reopened by authorities -- hopeful news in China where a prosecutorial office almost never calls for the re-opening of a case submitted by police.

But our hopes soon dimmed when it became obvious, despite this development, that my brothers were to remain behind bars. Eventually, after the postponing of several court dates that came after inquiries from the U.S. Department of State to Chinese officials in the embassy here in Washington and overseas in Beijing, their separate trials were finally held this past August at the Urumqi Intermediate Court. They now await their verdicts, which the judge told their lawyers would be issued by the Chinese Political and Law Council (“Zhengfawei”). These could come in two months, putting them after President Xi Jinping’s state visit to Washington.

I am grateful for the attention and concern my family’s case has received in the global press from fellow journalists – particularly from *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* and among human rights groups, U.S. officials, and members of Congress. We have worked with Senator Rubio and Senator Warner to raise this issue with State Department. This week on Monday (Sept. 14, 2015) I met with U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Tom Malinowski. He assured me that there is serious concern about my case throughout the department.

But despite these efforts -- and despite the sincere concern, for which I feel fortunate -- my brothers remain in jail. The suffering continues for my mother, my sister, and of course my brothers’ families. Their families are fatherless and without their husbands, and now basically without income. My 76-year-old mother worries.

For me, one thing is certain, I cannot give up my work at Radio Free Asia. As tensions and violence have escalated in the XUAR, the Uyghur people yearn for trustworthy news.

Today, I am here to ask for officials in the U.S. government -- my government -- and the Administration to raise this case with President Xi next week. My family only wants to be left alone, free from persecution by local authorities. They want to live their lives as citizens of a country that respects their wish to be husbands and fathers, looking after their families. I know my case is not unique. Many of my colleagues at Radio Free Asia with relatives in China also have faced retribution and harassment. But I hope my testimony today helps to ensure that the United States will continue to stand up for people like me who came to this country in hope of having the freedom and rights we didn’t have in our homelands.