



ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS  
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February 1, 2022

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C St NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

We write with regard to recent reports of the possible deportation of Turkic Muslims from Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Kazakhstan to the People's Republic of China (PRC). We urge you to intervene in these cases to prevent the refoulement of these individuals, as they are at serious risk of arbitrary detention, torture, and other forms of severe mistreatment if they are returned to China, particularly in light of the ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity taking place in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). These cases reflect the difficulties facing Uyghurs and Kazakhs seeking refuge from Chinese government persecution in countries with increasing Chinese economic influence. Uyghurs, Kazakhs and others previously deported to China from other countries have reportedly been detained or disappeared upon their return. Authorities in countries including Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Egypt, Thailand, and Malaysia have deported Uyghurs to China in the past decade, in violation of international law.

One of the individuals at risk is Uyghur computer engineer **Idris Hasan**, who faces imminent extradition from Morocco to China. On December 15, 2021, a court in Rabat, Morocco, approved a request made by Chinese authorities that Hasan, also known as Yidiresi Aishan, be extradited to China. Moroccan officials arrested Hasan in July 2021 due to an Interpol Red Notice, requested by the Chinese government, that accused Hasan, a PRC citizen and Turkish resident, of involvement in terrorism. However, in August 2021, following international pressure, Interpol canceled the Red Notice, citing its bylaws forbidding persecution on political, military, religious, or racial grounds. Hasan fled to Morocco to seek asylum following repeated detentions in Turkey, where he was listed on a Turkish government document containing the names of Uyghurs wanted by Chinese authorities. The Moroccan court's decision to extradite Hasan reportedly may have been connected to the significance Moroccan authorities placed on a bilateral treaty signed in 2016 that was tied to economic cooperation between the two countries.

In Saudi Arabia, authorities reportedly told Uyghur Muslims **Nurmemet Rozi** (Nuermaimaiti on his Chinese passport) and **Hemdullah Abduweli** (Aimidoula Waili on his Chinese passport) in early January 2022 that they would be deported soon. According to Human Rights Watch, Rozi

and Abduweli, both Turkish residents, were arrested in Saudi Arabia in November 2020, as the country prepared to host the G-20 leaders' summit. The two men have been held in prison without charge or trial. Abduweli traveled to Saudi Arabia in February 2020 to perform a religious pilgrimage and went into hiding after he feared Chinese authorities sought his deportation following a speech he made to local Uyghurs. Saudi authorities have in recent years indicated support for Chinese government policies in the XUAR, an alarming trend for Uyghurs traveling or residing in Saudi Arabia.

Lastly, according to an unverified report published by *Bitter Winter* on January 10, 2022, Kazakh police, together with Chinese consular officials, recently deported more than 100 ethnic Kazakh asylum seekers and students to China via the border city of Korgas. According to *Bitter Winter*, some of those deported had obtained residency status in Kazakhstan. While the Commission has not observed additional reports corroborating this disturbing report, we urge officials to seek further information and clarification from Kazakh officials. While Kazakh authorities have allowed some ethnic Kazakhs from the XUAR to remain in Kazakhstan, including those who have obtained Kazakh residency, officials have also pressured, detained, and otherwise persecuted some ethnic Kazakhs seeking to raise awareness about human rights abuses in the XUAR in recent years. *Bitter Winter's* report is particularly troubling in light of the uncertainty surrounding recent civil and political unrest in Kazakhstan.

In deporting Uyghurs and Kazakhs to China, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Kazakhstan would be violating the customary international law principle of nonrefoulement. In addition, as State Parties to the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, they must refrain from repatriating persons if there are "grounds for believing that [they] would be in danger of being subject to torture." Reporting by the Commission and a body of evidence from international media and human rights groups indicates there is a high likelihood they would face torture in China. We urge the Department of State to remind authorities in these countries of their obligations to prevent the deportation of such individuals, and to seek information and clarification from authorities in these countries regarding the above-mentioned cases.

Sincerely,



Senator Jeffrey A. Merkley  
Chairman



Representative James P. McGovern  
Co-Chairman