

**Statement By Mr. Sokrat Saydahmat,  
Member, Board of Directors, Uyghur American Association  
Congressional-Executive Commission on China Open Forum  
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As the representative of the Uyghur American Association, I am here to raise two troubling issues that indicate trends away from civil society and towards the cultural genocide of the people of East Turkistan, a.k.a. Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Despite the constitution of the Peoples Republic of China and laws that are supposed to guarantee and protect the non-Chinese peoples, new regulations have been enacted that ignore their rights and place the Uyghur people on a path to oblivion.

The first regulation of concern is the recent change to Xinjiang University that prohibits the Uyghur language in the classroom. Identified as needed for improving the standard of education, the Chinese government has extinguished the source of higher education the language of a civilization that stretches back to the 9th century. The Uyghur language and script have been used for over a thousand years and has documented religious texts on Buddhism, Christianity and Islam and the rich culture of Central Asian Turkic peoples. For the Chinese government to ban higher level instruction and thought is insulting to the Uyghur people on the grounds of 'improving education.' Such a policy change should be seen for the malevolent act it represents, the beginning of the purposeful destruction of Uyghur language and culture.

The second policy maintains the same goal, banning and burning Uyghur language books that disagree with today's Chinese government opinion. A total of 330 titles have been deemed problematic and witnesses in Kashgar have watched while thousands of literary and scientific works were burned this past June (2002). These books have such titles as, "Ancient Uyghur Craftsmanship", and "A Brief History of the Huns and Ancient Literature." Although the Chinese government once approved of the publication of these works, they are now deemed too controversial to read. We believe that the change in policy represents another facet of the purposeful destruction of Uyghur language and culture. It should also be noted that another reason given by the Chinese government authorities for ending Uyghur language instruction in Xinjiang University was a supposed lack of textbooks. How can someone ban and publicly burn books on one hand while declaring the cessation of Uyghur language instruction based on the lack of books?

We have raised concrete examples reported in the media that demonstrate that the Chinese government violates human and civil rights guaranteed under various United Nation instruments as well as the laws of the Peoples Republic of China. We would ask for an open, unfettered referendum to determine the future of the people of East Turkistan, by the people of East Turkistan.

The Uyghur people, language and culture are under attack and the Uyghur people must watch helplessly and alone as the Chinese government authorities continues the devastation.

We implore the United States government to put teeth into the United Nation Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. Please staff and fund the effort to raise issues at least as much as the Chinese government spends to table it.

Twelve million Uyghur people need a friend. We also implore the United States government to create and fund a position of Special Coordinator for Human Rights in East Turkistan, much as been created to assist the Tibetan people.

There are many problems that need to be solved in East Turkistan, but we hope that the visibility produced by these two suggestions will cause more of the problems to be solved and for conditions to improve for our people.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Board of Directors

Uyghur American Association