



AN INTERNATIONAL PEOPLE'S TRIBUNAL

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*Please note that all recordings of the Uyghur Tribunal hearings can be found on You Tube: [Uyghur Tribunal - YouTube](#)

ELIMINATION OF UYGHUR IDENTITY



- The Destruction and Desecration of Uyghur Mosques and Shrines
- Demolition of Uyghur Neighborhoods and Relocation of Uyghurs to “Labor Camp Towns”
- The Fate of My Father and Other Uyghur Intellectuals: Disappearance, Untimely Death, Death Sentence and Longterm Sentence

Written Testimony of Bahram K. Sintash for Uyghur Tribunal

August 2021

Part One

Desecration of Uyghur Mosques and Shrines

[Please read my 2019 report for more detailed information](#)

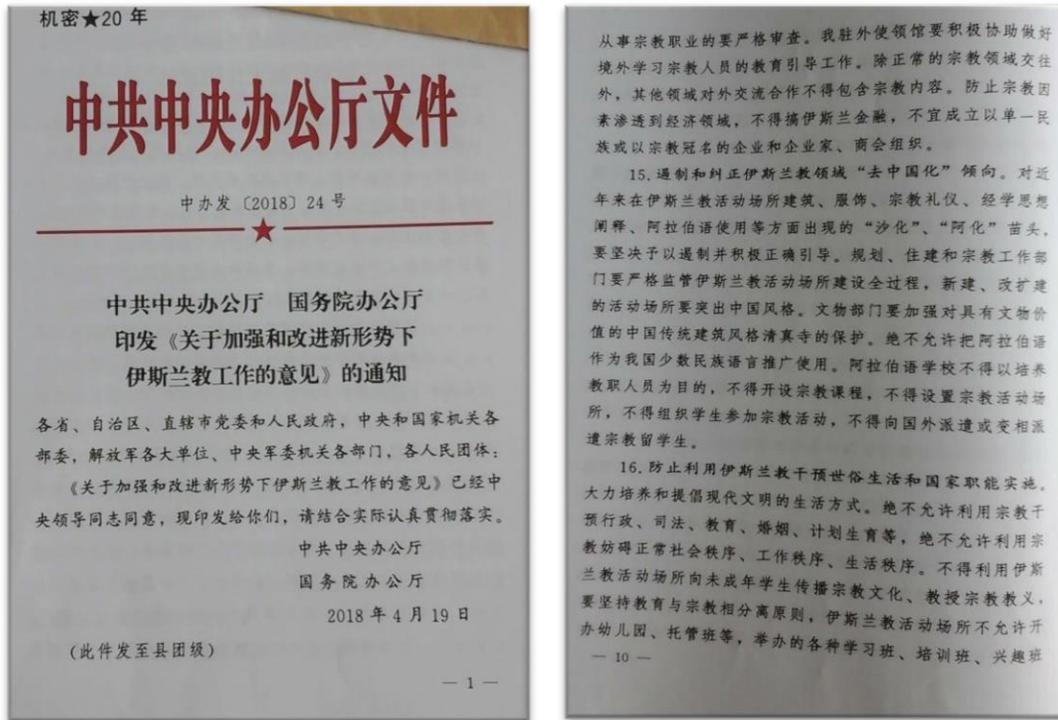
[Please visit my webpage for extra visual evidence including satellite images and other information](#)

The Chinese government's ongoing crackdown in the Uyghur region is aimed at eliminating Uyghur ethno cultural identity and assimilating them into an undifferentiated "Chinese" identity. As one of the cornerstones of their identity, Uyghurs' Islamic faith has been a major target of this campaign, resulting in many Uyghurs being sent to the network of concentration camps. This campaign has also taken the form of eradicating tangible signs of the region's Islamic identity from the physical landscape. This has involved the whole or partial demolition of an unprecedented number of mosques, including several historically significant buildings.

The accelerated campaign of mosque demolition began in 2016, at the same time as the largescale detention of Uyghurs and other Turkic people. The campaign was termed the "Mosque Rectification Program" and was undertaken with the justification of 'unsafe' construction.

Since the *Regulations on Religious Affairs* came into force in February 2018, the Chinese Communist government has strengthened its control and repression of Xinjiang's Muslim religion and culture under the pretext of "Sinicization" of religion.

In 2018 The CCP Central Committee released an Internal document, "Opinions on Strengthening and Improving Islamic Work in the New Situation", from the Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China.



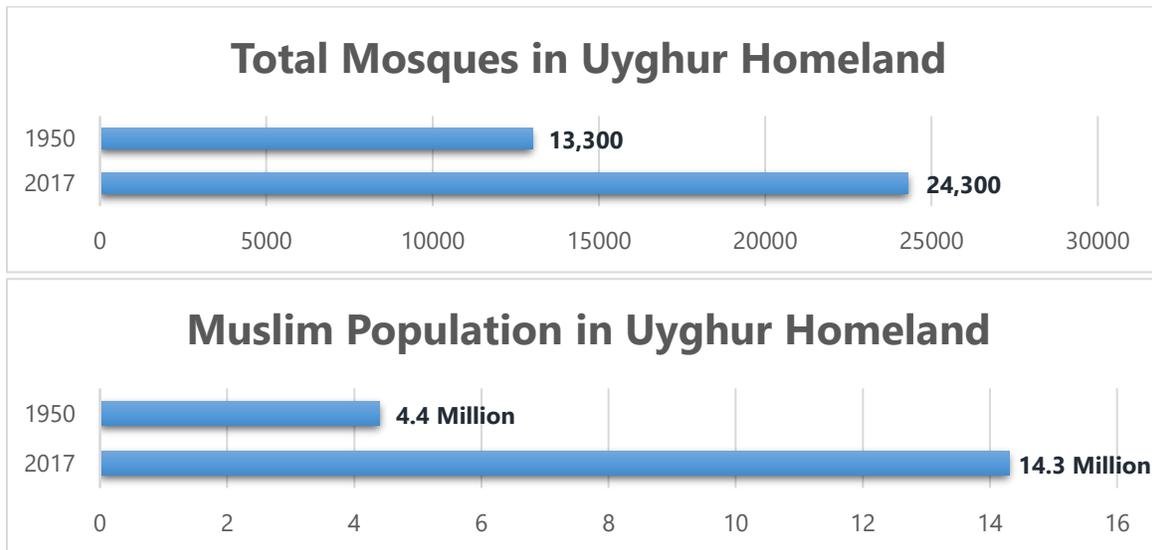
A selection of a confidential document, "Suggestions on Strengthening and Improving Islamic Work Under New Circumstances", issued by the Chinese Communist Party.

This confidential document states that all provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities, party and government agencies, the People's Liberation Army and various departments of the Central Military Commission should contain and correct the "de-Sinicization tendency" in the field of religion. To curb and actively and correctly guide the signs of desertification in the construction of Islamic venues, clothing, religious etiquette, interpretation of classics, and the use of Arabic. The document also calls for a unilateral ban on the construction or expansion of mosques and the reduction of mosques. Since then, the Uyghur Autonomous Region has witnessed a wave of shrinking mosques and the demolition of many mosques.

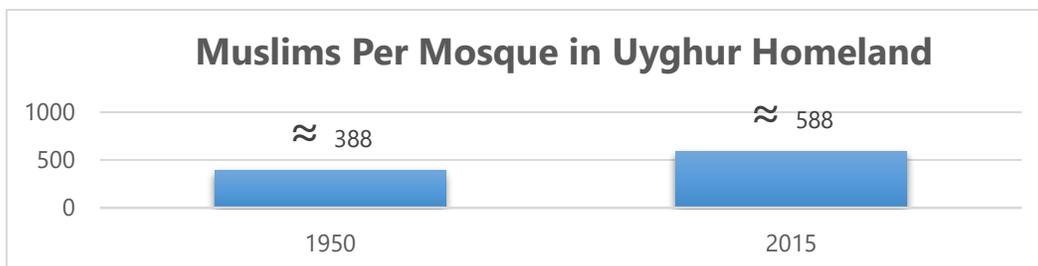
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- The deputy police chief of Mush in Toqzuaq County told RFA in 2016 that 46 of the 65 mosques in the town had been demolished.¹ In some cases there appears to be a pattern of demolishing all but one mosque in regional townships. These include the demolition of 13 of 14 mosques in Basjhisihu township in Wusu city in 2018,² seven of eight mosques in Lamjin town, Pichan County,³ and five of six mosques in Baghcha village in Aksu.⁴ Five mosques were demolished in two villages in Shawan County, with one in a neighboring village remaining open under heavy control.⁵
 - The head of the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee in Kashgar told RFA in 2016 that 70% of the mosques in the city had been demolished “because there were more than enough mosques and some were unnecessary,” contradicting the official line that the demolition campaign was motivated by issues of structural safety.⁶
 - In June 2018, Bitter Winter reported that one of their on-the-ground reporters was told by a staff member of the United Front Work Department in the city of Kumul that 200 of the 800 mosques in the region had been demolished in 2017 and there were plans to demolish a further 500 in 2018.⁷ Those that remain have had distinct architectural features such as domes and minarets removed as part of the government’s campaign to “Sinicize” Islam, and purge the buildings of “foreign” elements.⁸

How many mosques are available in the Uyghur Homeland (XUAR) for Uyghur Muslims and Muslims of other ethnicities?

On the world's stage, China claims that they are protecting Uyghur and other minorities' religious rights. They support their claim by citing the existence of over 24,300 mosques in the Uyghur region,⁹ this is a baseless claim. According to state reports, there were more than 13,000 mosques when the CCP took power in 1949.¹⁰



In the early 1950s, the total Uyghur population was more than 3.65 million and the population of other Muslims, such as Kazakh, Hui and Kyrgyz, was approximately 750,000. This amounts to roughly 1 mosque per 338 citizens. In 2017, the total Muslim population in the region was about 14.3 million. When calculated, it is easy to see that while there were 338 Muslims per mosque in the 1950s, in 2015 there were roughly 588 Muslims per mosque.



How many mosques and religious sites are actually demolished in Uyghur homeland since 2017?

I have discovered up to 140 mosques which have either been fully or partially demolished or had architectural features removed. Information from my sources from the region and through my examination of over 400 religious sites shows that, since 2017, about 30-40 percent of mosques were demolished in each township, in major counties, and cities all over the Uyghur region.

[CLICK TO SEE A LIST OF DEMOLISHED UYGHUR MOSQUES ALL AROUND UYGHUR HOMELAND SINCE 2017](#)



At the conclusion of my research in October 2019, Chinese authorities have demolished up to 10,000 to 15,000 Mosques/other Islamic religious sites, including thousands of pre-demolished mosques with domes and towers destroyed; **this number must have increased since then**. Large mosques in townships and cities were demolished all around XUAR as well.

The data matches with what I was told during interviews I conducted with Uyghurs living overseas, who have left towns and villages in different parts

of the region since 2017. I believe these small village mosques are the majority of the demolished mosques. As an example, in the town of Changji, I found 3 mosques demolished and 12 mosques with their domes and minarets removed. All of the mosques in this small city were affected. I believe that if you take a conservative estimate, 80% of the mosques around the Uyghur region have been affected, which means as many as 10,000 to 15,000 mosques have been affected by the campaign. This includes both those that have been completely and partially demolished, as well as those with architectural elements removed. Based on this and my survey of mosques in towns and cities around the region, I believe, in total, about 10,000-15,000 is a reasonable estimate of the number of mosques affected.

The Conclusion

The destruction of mosques is at the heart of the Chinese government's campaign of cultural genocide in the Uyghur homeland. It appears their ultimate goal is to eliminate the Islamic faith from the region. Muslims believe mosques to be God's home and where Muslims feel God's mercy and feel themselves close to God. Mosques are where people can go to be with and believe themselves to be a part of the Muslim community. Without mosques, Muslims cannot deliver their religion to the next generation. Without mosques, Muslims become religiously homeless in their homeland.

China's aim: to erase the original landowner's culture & identity to "guarantee peace & stability" for the Chinese government and its Han Chinese emigrates in the Uyghur homeland.

Part Two

Demolishing of Uyghur Neighborhoods All around Uyghur Homeland

The Chinese government have demolished Uyghur neighborhoods on a mass scale in villages, townships, and cities all around Uyghur homeland (XUAR) in the past few years. Unlike the campaign of mosques and other religious site destruction that I testified in part one, Chinese government have been doing this campaign openly in the name of "the mission of eradicating absolute poverty" and "public convenience".

The XUAR government has publicly announced that the demolition of Uyghur neighborhoods is a realization of the Chinese Central Government's Plan. XUAR government even released accurate data on how many Uyghur homes/neighborhoods have been demolished and how many Uyghurs have been relocated to confirm their achievements.



According to the Xinjiang Daily [news](#), on August 10th 2021, the XUAR government, the Development and Reform Commission of the Autonomous Region, the Rural Revitalization Bureau of the Autonomous Region and other 24 departments jointly issued the, "Implementation Opinions of

the Autonomous Region on Effectively Doing a Good Job in the Follow-up

Support for Relocation and Poverty Alleviation, Consolidating and Expanding the Results of Relocation and Alleviation of Poverty" plan.

The Xinjiang Daily news also emphasized the "opinion" of General Secretary Xi Jinping, pointing out that *"it is necessary to increase the follow-up support for the relocation and poverty alleviation."* The *"Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on Achieving the Effective Connection of the Consolidation and Expansion of Poverty Alleviation and the Effective Connection of Rural Revitalization"* also emphasizes the follow-up support for relocation as an important duty.

The Number is shocking



According to the Chinese Economic Daily [news](#) on July 10th 2020, in 2019, XUAR completed the "13th Five-Year Plan" for poverty alleviation and relocation, with 169,400 people in 40,146 households across the Uyghur region.

The Chinese government has also announced that the campaign to

demolish Uyghur neighborhoods has launched based on three prefectures and one oblast in southern Uyghur homeland, where 90% of the population is Uyghur. According to the China News Service [news](#) on February 9th 2021,

During the "13th Five-Year Plan" period, 35,200 "poor" households and 139,500 people were relocated in Kashgar, Hotan, Aksu Prefecture and Kizilsu Kirgiz Autonomous Prefecture, accounting for 87% of the relocation tasks in Xinjiang."



Chinese authorities are continuing to expand its motion of demolishing Uyghur neighborhoods in the name of "public convenience." According to the Xinjiang Daily [news](#) on July 12th, authorities have begun demolishing 1,526 Uyghur neighborhoods in

Uyghur Autonomous Region this year. According to the Xinjiang Daily, this year's plan to demolish the Uyghur neighborhoods will cover 210,430 households, of which 92.6 percent have already started construction.

According to the official news website of XUAR, Tianshannet [news](#), on May 31st, the Uyghur Autonomous Region Reform and Development Commission has decided to complete the demolition of "old" neighborhoods several times faster than previous years. 230,000 "old" homes will be demolished in the 2021 plan. The Chinese government has allocated 2.8 billion Yuan (about \$ 440 million) for this.

Where have Uyghurs been relocated?

Relocation of Uyghurs from their villages where they have lived for generations to the resettlement locations middle of nowhere



Chinese government has relocated 14,000 Uyghur farmers and herdsman living in Kokyar, Kargilik to the resettlement location in county's Aktash district since 2017 (Xinhua News)

According to a TianshanNet [video news story](#), "Yusuf Has Moved and Started A New life", Yusuf Hoshur, a resident of the 5th village of Kachung



village in Yarkant, has been relocated with his family to the relocation site in Yungan District, which was built, 50 km from Yarkant County, Kashgar in 2017.

These Uyghur communities have been relocated from Kachung, Qoshirap and Damsi villages in the Zarapshan River Valley to Yungan District, located on a plains 50 km from Yarkant County in 2017. Image: Google Earth

The video clearly shows that this resettlement location was built on a barren plain.

According to the RFA [report](#) on this resettlement mission of Yarkant County, these Uyghur communities, who were relocated from Kachung, Qoshrap and Damsi villages in the Zarapshan River Valley in the name of “poverty alleviation”, were forcibly moved out of their ancient villages, traditional homes, vast pastures and fertile farmland. These Uyghur farmers have become factory workers, which is alien to their way of life and customs.



Satellite image of the Yungan District, located on a plains 50 km from Yarkant County, where residents of Kachung Village, Yarkent were relocated. Image: Google Earth

According to the [Xinhua News](#), since 2017, the Chinese government has relocated 14,000 Uyghur farmers and herdsmen living in Kokyar, Kargilik to the resettlement location in the county's Aktash district. Currently, Uyghur farmers and herdsmen relocated to the Aktash market are working in Chinese shoe factories and vegetable greenhouses set up in the market.



Satellite image of Kargilik county, since 2017, Chinese government has relocated 14,000 Uyghur farmers and herdsmen living in various villages of Kargilik to the resettlement location in county's Aktash district. Image: Google Earth

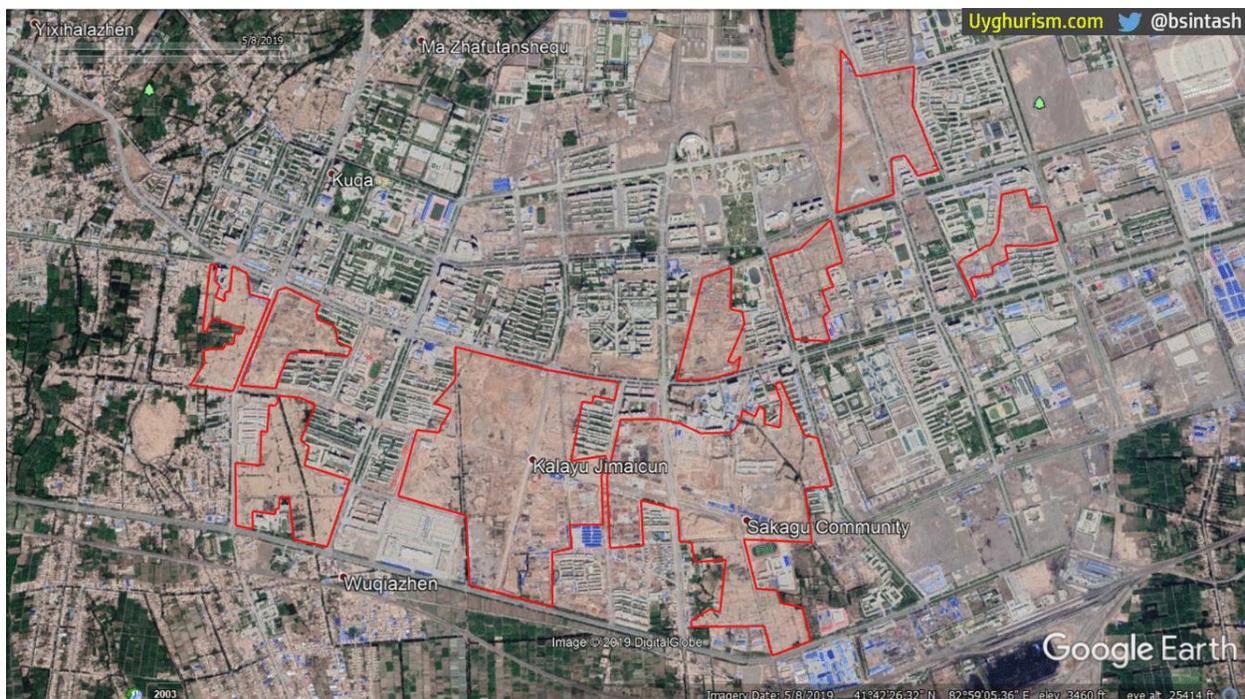
According to the RFA [report](#) on this resettlement mission of Kargilik County, the plan by the Chinese authorities is to turn Uyghur farmers into low-cost forced laborers and to control them more effectively. These farmers, who have lost their homes and traditional lifestyles, have become cheap labor for Chinese factories and are being used in Chinese factories and farms in the resettlement location.



Uyghur workers from a shoe company are busy in the factory in the resettlement location built for the mission of "poverty alleviation and relocation" in Aktash, Kargilik County (photographed on March 19, 2020). [Photo](#) by Xinhua News Agency

How has the local authorities completed such a big campaign, in such a short time? Did every Uyghur agree to move? What kind of force was used?

According to my 2019 [investigation](#), the total size of the demolished Uyghur neighborhoods in downtown of Kucha (Kuqa) County is around 3,820,614 m² (41124746.83 square feet), equaling about 750 American football fields. About 40,000-60,000 people can live in these demolished neighborhoods. Analyzing the satellite images, I found out that this mass destruction of the Uyghur neighborhood in Kucha was completed in less than 3 months. Thousands of homes were demolished at the same time, and neighborhoods were bulldozed one by one.



The demolished Uyghur neighborhoods in downtown of Kucha County. Image: Google Earth



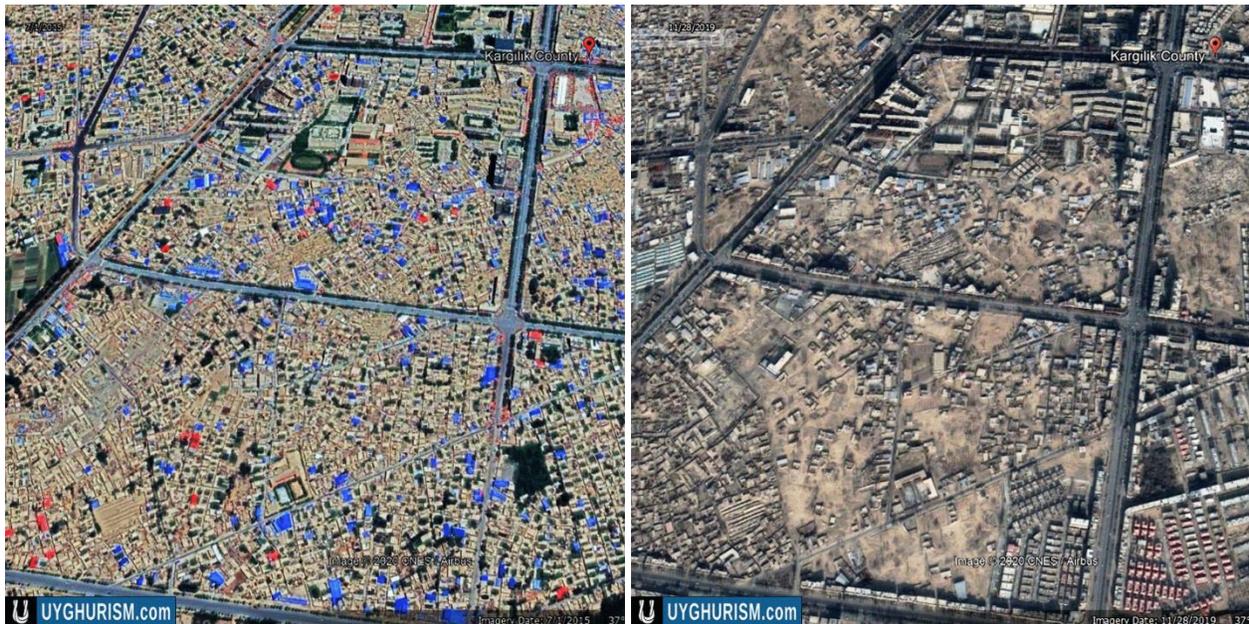
Kucha is a county in XUAR under the administration of the Aksu Prefecture. It covers an area of 15,200 km² (5,870 sq mi). In the 2002 census, Kucha's population was listed as 450,000, of mostly Uyghurs. It was once the homeland of the ancient Buddhist Kingdom of Kosan. The estimated population of these demolished Uyghur neighborhoods make up more than 10% of

the total population of Kucha County.

I cannot imagine this happening in any other country in the modern day. I compared the demolished neighborhoods in Kucha to South Riding, Virginia, one of the largest planned communities in Virginia, home to 31,000 people and where I live. What would be the consequences if the government of Virginia ordered all householders to move out of their homes and relocated them to the middle of nowhere to work as factory workers, and then demolished the entire South Riding area in less than 3 months? This is something that goes beyond my imagination. All I can say is that this kind of tragedies has only happened to the Jewish communities in Nazi Germany in WW2 or Tatar communities in Crimea in the Stalin era of Soviet Union. These are shocking evidence of China's ongoing genocide against Uyghurs.

What is China building after demolishing the Uyghur neighborhoods?

Uyghur neighborhoods are being demolished and new buildings are being built on the demolished sites all around the XUAR. I [documented](#) 8 of those neighborhoods which were demolished in Urumqi, Yarkent, Kriya, Kargilik, and Karikash between 2018 to 2019.



*Before-After images of a demolished neighborhood site in Kargilik County of Kashgar
Demolished in 2019*

According to the various testimonies of Uyghurs who fled overseas in recent years and the announcement of the Chinese government itself, these demolished neighborhoods were inhabited by Chinese immigrants from mainland China.



Picture of newly built neighborhoods in Aktu Township near Kashgar city. Credit: Pak Yiu

In June 2019, AFP [reporter](#) Pak Yiu sent three pictures and asked me how Uyghur towns looked no different than Chinese cities while he was visiting Aktu Township near Kashgar city.

China is transforming Uyghur towns and cities into Chinese style cities that can suit to Han Chinese immigrants. The Chinese government is working on a "man-made" project in increasing the Han Chinese population in the region, which is illegal according to the Regional Ethnic Autonomy [Law](#) of the People's Republic of China. Demolished Uyghur neighborhoods are built as new neighborhoods with tens of thousands of new Han Chinese immigrants moving in and feeling at home in Uyghur homeland.

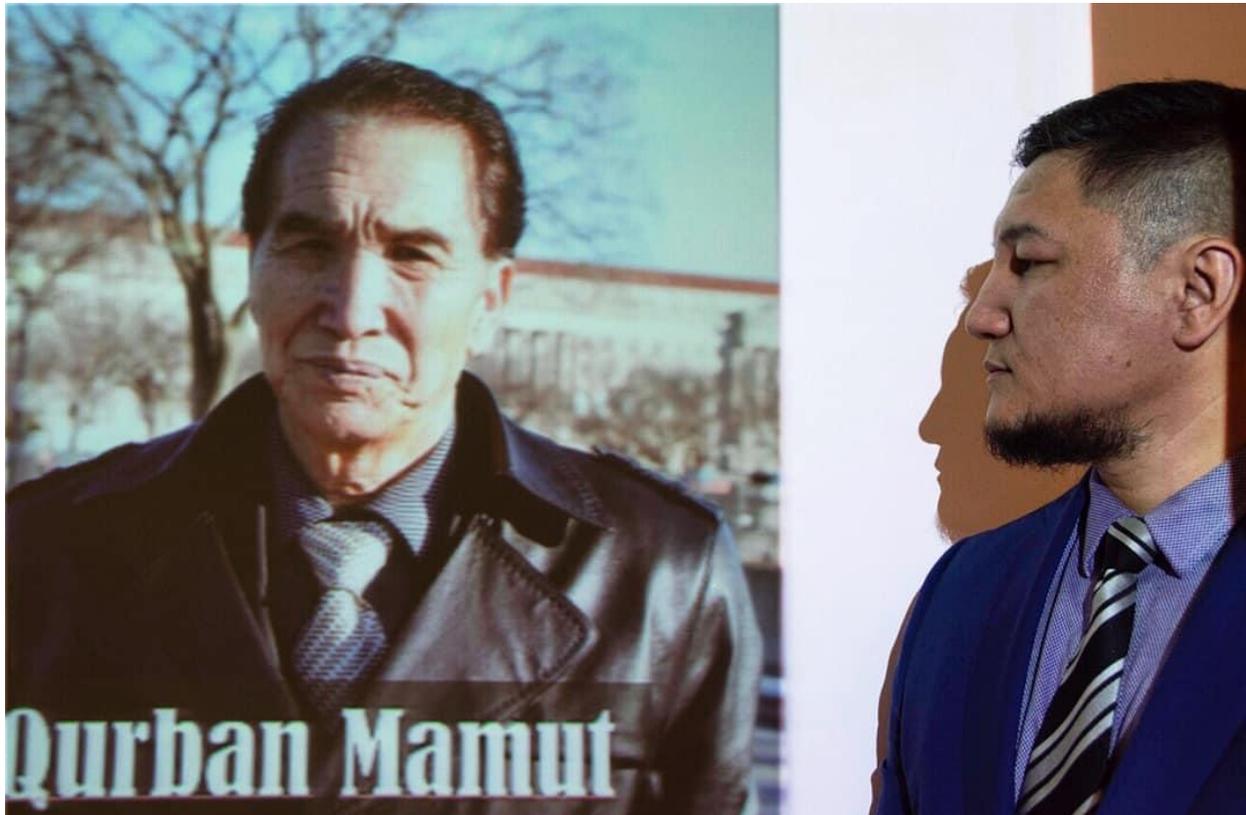
According to this RFA [reprt](#), in Aksu, 14,821 newly built houses have been allotted. Demolished “old” Uyghur neighborhoods were replaced by a new residential area called “[The Happiness Project](#)”. Those who moved into this newly built residential areas were Chinese immigrants, not the Uyghur city residents whose “old” homes were demolished.

The Conclusion

- The demolition of Uyghur neighborhoods and the relocation of Uyghurs is a campaign that is under the unified plan of the Chinese Central Government, which the Xinjiang government has completed as an annual mission for years.
- The campaign of demolition of Uyghur neighborhoods and the relocation of Uyghurs was never done with the consent of the Uyghurs, but rather as a result of the Chinese government's crackdown on Uyghurs.
- The campaign of demolition of Uyghur neighborhoods and the relocation of Uyghurs will lead to irreparable losses in terms of preserving the cultural identity of Uyghurs and natural growth of the Uyghur population.
- Forced labor is being carried out in the factories built in these settlements, where the Uyghurs are under complete control. These places are like labor camps.

Part Three

The Fate of My Father and Other Uyghur Intellectuals: Disappearance, Untimely Death, Death Sentence and Longterm Sentence



Bahram K. Sintash is looking at his father Qurban Mamut's photo at a presentation in Washington DC in 2019

About My Father Qurban Mamut:

My father Qurban Mamut is a prominent Uyghur intellectual, husband, father and grandfather. My father is a former editor-in-chief of the Communist Party-controlled Uyghur journal *Xinjiang Civilization*. He worked for this popular Uyghur journal from 1985 until he retired as editor-in-chief in 2011. He was known for selecting works by the region's most influential writers on Uyghur culture, history, politics and social development for

publication. My father played an important role in illuminating ethnic consciousness among the people in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). The main goal of the *Xinjiang Civilization* journal was teaching Uyghurs to understand themselves and to educate them about their Uyghur culture and history. The essays and articles in the journal were mainly focused on the thoughts behind Uyghurs' reality and keeping their culture alive for the next generation.

My Father's Detainment:

In February 2017, my father traveled with my mom to visit us in the United States for a month. Within months after returning to China, my father went missing. Around September 2018, I learned that my father was taken to a re-education camp in Urumqi in late 2017. According to the information I learned from one of our neighbors in August 2018, my father had not been seen in the community since the end of 2017. Later, I also learned from our other neighbors that my father was taken away from his home to one of the re-education centers around that time. In a 2018 [investigation](#), Radio Free Asia corroborated my father's disappearance for the first time. In 2020, my father's continued detainment was [confirmed](#) via a phone call to Urumqi to my father's former co-worker, a Han Chinese staffer at the Xinjiang Hall of Public Culture. The staffer answered RFA reporter's question about my father's whereabouts: *"He's not currently here ... he's been retired for a long time," she said. "And then his situation later, perhaps you know, he's currently classified as a 'detained person.'"* When asked whether Mamut had been sentenced to prison or sent to an internment camp, the staffer said she did not know.

Xinjiang authorities blocked my family members from all overseas communication since February 2018. Like many Uyghurs in diaspora, I have lost connection with my family back home. All I know is that my father was abducted. I don't know which detention center or prison he is currently in.



My Father's Case Highlights the Fate of Uyghur Intellectuals

While Chinese government official's claim that these re-education internment camps are "free vocational training," my father's forced detention proves that this is not the real intent of the facilities. As a retired 71-year-old who spent decades building a professional career, he is not in need of further "vocational training." My father's detention is part of the Chinese government's crackdown on over 380 Uyghur intellectuals. This crackdown of Uyghur intellectuals is known as an alarming symbol of the Communist Party's most intense social engineering drive in decades. My father's case is compelling. His case in particular highlights the efforts of the Chinese government to suppress the culture and religion of the Uyghurs, and anyone who represents or promotes it.

I Don't Know If My Father Is Dead or Alive

This is the aspect that worries me the most because, since the mass detention of Uyghur intellectuals and scholars, I often hear news that important Uyghur intellectuals like my father have died during their abduction. For example, according to the mainstream media, the famous Uyghur writer Nurmammed Tohti died following his detention in the Chinese re-education camp in 2019. He was my father's best friend, and he was my father's age when he was killed. Another example: the famous religious scholar Muhammad Salih Qari Hajim also died under Chinese Police Custody at age 82 in 2018. There are also more reports of other well-known Uyghur intellectuals dying in training camps or in captivity. I can collect and submit those reports if necessary to the tribunal. The reason why I mentioned this information is that my father is over 70 years old, many of those who were killed after their abduction were well-known and experienced elderly Uyghurs who were important to the Uyghur society, and my father is one of them. This is why I am very worried that my father might also die due to torture or bad conditions of the detention facilities. China might tightly control my father's information if he has already died, this is my suspicion after 4 years of not knowing his whereabouts.

Uyghur Intellectuals like my father are The Ultimate Target of This Crackdown

My father's editorial job was always a very sensitive job. He always worked under strict government scrutiny. To publish important works on Uyghur culture and Uyghur society in the magazine, he always had to know the red line in the eyes of the government at that time. He had to work very close to the red line to publish those important works and sensitive topics from Uyghur authors. He had successfully worked for this stressful job as editor-in-chief of the most popular Uyghur journal for more than 25 years and retired in 2011. Since 2017, the red line has moved. Suddenly, my father and more than 380 other Uyghur intellectuals who had successfully navigated the worlds of academia, art, and journalism became the latest targets of a sweeping crackdown in the Uyghur region. I was not surprised

that my father was among the people who became the ultimate target of this crackdown.

The Conclusion:

There is clear evidence of the Chinese government's crimes against Uyghur society and culture. The mass abduction of the most important Uyghur elites and intellectuals like my father, their long-term imprisonment, and killing of the most important and elderly Uyghur intellectuals were part of the elimination of the Uyghur population and identity.

Supplementary Material

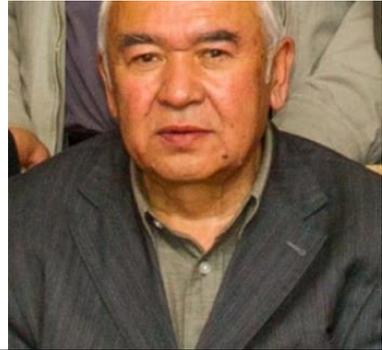
Since April 2017, the Chinese government has interned, imprisoned, or forcibly disappeared at least 435 intellectuals as part of its intensified assault on Uyghurs and erasure of their culture. This group is likely a small fraction of all Uyghur intellectuals suffering serious human rights violations.

The Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP) has previously released three reports documenting the persecution of Uyghur intellectuals. In October 2018, UHRP identified [231](#) impacted intellectuals. A January 2019 update added 107 known cases, for a total of [338](#) intellectuals affected by these serious mass atrocities. In March 2019, a second update brought the total to [386](#).

According to the [Xinjiang Victims Database](#), 49 individuals have died in custody or shortly after their release, including intellectuals, among them religious scholars [Muhammad Salih Hajim](#) and [Abdulehed Mehsum](#); scholars [Abdusattar Qarahajim](#) and [Erkinjan Abdukerim](#); and students [Abdusalam Mamat, Yasinjan](#) and [Mutellip Nurmehmet](#).

Case Lists

Individuals who have died in custody or shortly after their release; and those sentenced to death, including intellectuals and religious scholars:

	<p>Nurm Muhammad Tohti Prominent Uyghur Writer Died at 70 Had been detained in one of the Internment Camp camps since November 2018. Died at an Internment Camp in his home town Hotan in 2019. More info here</p>
	<p>Muhammad Salih Hajim Prominent Uyghur Islamic scholar Died at 82 Died in Chinese police custody, some 40 days after he was detained in the Xinjiang regional capital Urumqi in 2018. More info here</p>
	<p>Mirzahid Kerimi Prominent Uyghur Poet and Author Died at 83 Had died on Jan. 9, 2021. RFA was able to confirm that he passed away in prison while serving his latest term. More info here</p>
	<p>Mamatiminjan Yunus Prominent Uyghur Islamic scholar Died at 56 Had been detained in one of the Internment Camp camps since 2017. Died at an internment camp in his home town Hotan in June 2020. More info here</p>



Abdulhekim Muhammad

Prominent Uyghur Islamic scholar

Died at 59

He was arrested in July 2017 and sentenced to 10 years in prison. Died in prison in June 2019. [More info here](#)



Sattar Sawut

Uyghur politician, former director of the Xinjiang Education Department

Sentenced to death

He was detained in Feb 2017. Was sentenced to death with two-year suspend. [More info here](#)



Halmurat Guppur

Uyghur Pharmacist, president of the Xinjiang Food and Drug Administration's Department of Inspection and Supervision

Sentenced to death

He was arrested in November 2017. Given two-year suspended death sentence. [More info here](#)



Tashpolat Tiyp

Uyghur scholar, geographer and President of Xinjiang University

Sentenced to death

He was arrested in November 2017. He was allegedly sentenced to death with 2-year reprieve, with official. [More info here](#)

ENDNOTES

- 1) Hoshur , Shoret, December 19, 2016 "Under the Guise of Public Safety, China Demolishes Thousands of Mosques" Radio Free Asia <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/udner-the-guise-of-public-safety-12192016140127.html>
 - 2) Li Zaili, August 5, 2018 "Only One Mosque Left in Bashisiu Township Wusu City" Bitter Winter <https://bitterwinter.org/only-one-mosque-left-in-bashisiu-township-wusu-city>
 - 3) Li Zaili, August 9, 2018 "More Destroyed Mosques in Xinjiang" Bitter Winter <https://bitterwinter.org/moredestroyed-mosques-in-xinjiang/>
 - 4) Hoshur, Shoret, September 7, 2018 "Chinese Authorities Continue to Destroy Mosques in Xinjiang" Radio Free Asia <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/chinese-authorities-continue-to-destroy-mosques-in-xinjiang09072018171910.html?searchterm:utf8:ustring=%20mosques>
 - 5) Li Zaili, February 5, 2019 "County in Xinjiang: A Case Study in Destroying Faith" Bitter Winter <https://bitterwinter.org/a-case-study-in-destroying-faith/>
 - 6) 5 Hoshur , Shoret, December 19, 2016 "Under the Guise of Public Safety, China Demolishes Thousands of Mosques" Radio Free Asia <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/udner-the-guise-of-public-safety-12192016140127.html>
 - 7) Bitter Winter, June 19, 2018 "Chinese Government Demolishes Mosques in Xinjiang" <https://bitterwinter.org/chinese-government-demolishes-mosques-in-xinjiang/>
 - 8) 敏俊卿 April 8, 2017 "清真寺建筑风格研讨会在西安召开" 中国穆斯林 <http://m.chinaislam.net.cn/cms/news/xhwx/201704/040Q00332017.html>
 - 9) Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, September 21, 2009 "Development and Progress in Xinjiang" http://www.gov.cn/english/official/2009-09/21/content_1422566.htm
 - 10) Abduriheyim, Hasan, 2015 "Xinjiang Islam Binakarliki" Xinjiang People's Publishing House
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1 **11 September 2021 (7:41:50 – 8:20:39)**

2 **Bahram Sintash**

3 *[transcribing note: low-quality recording, please do not quote directly]*

4

5 BAHRAM SINTASH – My testimony today included three important topics. Topic one:

6 Demolishing of Uyghur mosques. The Chinese government’s on-going crackdown in

7 the Uyghur region is aimed at elimination Uyghur ethno-cultural identity and

8 differentiated Chinese identities of Uyghurs Islamic State has been a measure target

9 of this campaign. The campaign of mosques demolishing began in 2016. The

10 campaign has taken the form of eradicating tangible signs of the region's Islamic

11 identity from the principal landscape. The campaign was termed the “rectification

12 programme”. The programme of the mosque rectification programme and was

13 undertaken with the justification of mosque demolishing. The CCP Central Committee

14 released an intro document which called for unilateral ban on mosque construction or

15 expansion of mosques and a reduction of mosques. Instead, the Uyghur Autonomous

16 Region has witnessed a way of shrinking mosques and a reduction of many mosques.

17 More than 140 mosques, which have fully or partially destructed or demolished or have

18 Islamic architectural features removed. Information from my source in the region and

19 my examination over 400 mosques and religious sites on the satellite imagery since

20 2017 about 30-40% of mosques were demolished in the townships in major counties

21 and cities all across the Uyghur region. The small village mosques are the majority of

22 the destroyed mosques. At the end of my research in 2019, I estimated that 80% of

23 village mosques have been affected all around the Uyghur region which means in total

24 as many as 15.000 are affected by the campaign. This number must have been
25 increasing still.

26 Demolition of mosques is at the heart of Chinese government campaign of genocide
27 in Uyghur homeland. It appears that their ultimate goal is to eliminate the Islamic faith
28 in Uyghur region. Without mosques, Uyghurs cannot deliver their religion and culture
29 to the next generation. Without mosques Uyghur become religiously homeless in their
30 own homeland. Uyghur neighbourhoods and relocation of Uyghurs. The Chinese
31 government has demolished Uyghur neighbourhoods on a mass scale in various
32 townships and cities all around Uyghur homeland in the past few years.

33 Mosque destruction. The Chinese government has been doing this campaign under
34 the disguise of the Chinese government...under the disguise of the “demolition of
35 eradicating absolute poverty and public convenience”. Regional government has
36 publicly announced that the demolishing of Uyghur neighbourhood is the realisation of
37 the Central Chinese government plan. Xinjiang Autonomous Region even released
38 data on how many Uyghur homes and neighbourhoods have been demolished and
39 how many Uyghurs have been re-located to confirm their extremism in this mission.

40 Daily News emphasised the opinions of Secretary General Xi Jinping pointing out “that
41 it is necessary to increase the follow-up support for the relocation and poverty
42 alleviation”. According to China Economic Daily News, Xinjiang government
43 completed the relocation mission in 2019 with 169400 people in 4146 households
44 across the Uyghur region. About 87% of the relocation were in the Kashgar, Hotan,
45 Aksu Prefecture. According to Tianshan Net, the Chinese Uyghur Autonomous Region
46 government and development commission has decided to complete the demolishing
47 of “old neighbourhoods”. 230 000 will be demolished in the 20/21 plan. The Chinese

48 Central government has allocated 2.8 billion Yuan, about 440 million USD for re-
49 development of Uyghur region.

50 Examples. According to the Tianshan Net news story, residents of Kachung village in
51 Yarkant were re-located to Yonggang district which was built 50 kilometres away from
52 Yarkant in 2017. According to the RFA report on this resettlement of Yarkant county,
53 the Uyghur community is relocated to Kachung, Qoshirap and Damsivillages in the
54 Qoshirap river valley were removed out of their ancient village and homes. The
55 Uyghur farmers are now factory workers which is alien to their way of life and customs.
56 According to the Xinhua New, since 2017, Chinese government has relocated 40 000
57 Uyghur villagers living in Kargilik to the resettlement location in the country of Aktash
58 district. Currently these Uyghur farmers are being relocated to the Aktash, are working
59 in Chinese shoe factory. The factories are being built in the resettlement where the
60 Uyghurs are under the complete control. [*inaudible*] are being demolished and new
61 buildings are built on demolished sights all over Uyghur homeland. I documented eight
62 of these neighbourhoods which were demolished in Urumqi, Yarkant, Kargilik,
63 Karikash between 2018 and 2019. The campaign of demolishing of Uyghur
64 neighbourhoods and relocation of Uyghurs was never done with the consent of the
65 Uyghurs and result of Chinese government crackdown.

66 *COUNSEL – Mr Sintash, all of this is in your report with the pictures. I have two or*
67 *three questions which I would like to raise before I am asking the Tribunal to pose their*
68 *questions. You say in your report that you have personally investigated the demolition*
69 *or partial destruction of 140 mosques. You also refer to your examination of 400*
70 *religious sites. Is it correct, especially the figures you quote, the 1500 mosques is your*
71 *best estimate and not based on empirical studies of the sites?*

72 BS – We have a method of using how many percentage of the mosques being
73 demolished. Also collecting the official records, the official they told that the
74 percentage of the mosque in particular counties and towns to we can estimate the
75 amount of the demolished mosques using the targeted cities. For example, Tangi, is
76 a small city, there are about 15 mosques that were available but 80% there were
77 demolished and using this kind of method we apply that to the other cities and
78 townships, we can estimate the number. The 15 000 is limited. It must be more than
79 this until now. That is my best estimation but could be 70 000 or 60 000. This is my
80 estimation of 2019.

81 *COUNSEL – You say that 30-40% are demolished. If the Chinese government wanted*
82 *to demolish, why did they stop at 30-40%? Why did the Chinese government not*
83 *demolish all of them?*

84 BS – I think that the work that we have done affected Chinese action on this because
85 we published those. If the world were to know about China's demolition of the mosques
86 so the report was published in 2019. I think Chinese government could rely on the
87 demolition of mosques because of the report being released. China cannot demolish
88 entire mosques. They can keep some of them to show the international community
89 that they are preserving mosques and that they are available, but the point is that
90 these mosques are not the majority...for example, main target to demolish mosques
91 that township people; the farmers don't have available mosque in their own town.
92 Some of the larger mosques in the centre of the country, they are available. For
93 example, if a mosque wasn't demolished but is there but China always ...to lie to the
94 world that they are preserving the mosques and still there and that what we are saying
95 Uyghur researchers are saying that historic mosques are being demolished is wrong.

96 China just keeping some of them. The number is shocking, more than 15000 mosques
97 have been demolished. This is true. We have facts of that.

98 *COUNSEL – The demolition of the old neighbourhood: is this policy limited to*
99 *Xinjiang or is this being carried out throughout China. The older neighbourhoods are*
100 *destroyed to give way for new cities?*

101 BS – I don't know what the policies are for other parts of China but people are tricked,
102 poverty alleviation means makes money, better lives. I think it comes for Uyghurs. This
103 could change our way of life or customs. For example, the people that are being moved
104 into what I called "labour ponds", where people work in the factories; this is how
105 Uyghurs have been living so this could affect Uyghur national population growth
106 because as you know Uyghurs are Muslim. We have different life style because of
107 culture. We have a higher population growth compared to other parts of China. So, if
108 people move into the factory neighbourhoods, this affects our growth of population
109 because as you know the city population to township and farmers because of the living
110 style. ...in the farmers...population growth is more than in cities. Now Uyghurs are
111 living somewhere under full control, limit cultural a limited size of houses where they
112 live, work in the factories. This changed entire Uyghur style of living and customs
113 affected Uyghur natural birth population.

114 *PANEL – You describe the desecration of mosques that were taken down domes and*
115 *some minarets. Is that a precursor to total demolition or are the mosques still usable*
116 *or not?*

117 BS – Can you repeat, please?

118 *PANEL – You describe the taking down of domes and minarets of mosques and I*
119 *asked is that a precursor that leads to total demolition or do they carry on being used?*

120 BS – Because the domes and minarets is the main architectural element. It is what
121 makes it a mosque. Without a minaret or dome, this building becomes a [*inaudible*].
122 According to my research and some of the testimonies, China government is using
123 that building for other duties, for example, a centre using propaganda for the
124 government to gather people for the meeting and somehow, they use the same
125 location for other duties, not for using for the mosques so people no longer go to these
126 mosques and pray as before. There is a lock and no one can enter the mosque. This
127 is about the destruction...

128 *PANEL – You cite the Bitter Winter report in 2018, where in the city of Kumul, 200 of*
129 *the 800 mosques were being destroyed and you also suggested the destruction of a*
130 *further 500, leaving only 100 out of 800 was planned for demolition in 2018. Do we*
131 *know whether that has occurred?*

132 BS – The 140 demolished mosques research was conducted by myself. I examined
133 and located originally 1000 locations and found 400 of those locations that I suspected
134 must be demolished and I found 140 completely demolished and partially demolished
135 mosque locations. Evidence is overwhelming. Everywhere we could find more
136 evidence, where, when, what location, I investigate. And also, Uyghurs... [technical
137 issues arising] We have overwhelming evidence. Everywhere people are saying that
138 mosques are being demolished in their compounds.

139 *PANEL – I am very sorry to hear about the disappearance of your father and in that*
140 *section of your report, you say that it is estimated that 435 intellectuals have*
141 *disappeared. I wondered what the denominator for that figure is. How many people*
142 *would be classified as intellectuals amongst the Uyghur population?*

143 BS – It is 380 in my report. This is the number from late 2018, beginning 2019. That
144 number has since increased to up to 500. People lost entire Uyghur intellectuals. As
145 you know, Uyghurs have a long history. We are very educated. We have so many
146 intellectual people among us. Now Uyghur society is without their own intellectuals.
147 We might say more than 5% of well-known Uyghur intellectuals.

148 *PANEL – After the demolition of the mosques, what do they built on the site? Do they*
149 *built on top of it and if so, does that attract other Uyghurs to it as a possible sacred*
150 *site?*

151 BS – After China demolished mosques, they built department buildings. So instead
152 building in modern style of using for religious practice. Also, demolished
153 neighbourhoods being turned into new residential area in style of Chinese
154 characteristics. We have overwhelming evidence for that. Chinese immigrants are
155 settling in these new neighbourhoods after the demolition of Uyghur neighbourhoods,
156 where the Uyghur neighbourhood was demolished.

157 *PANEL – In the name of poverty alleviation, several communities including a lot of*
158 *families have been forcibly moved out of their villages and homes. Some of whom*
159 *would have had vast pastures and huge amounts of fertile farmland you note in your*
160 *report. Do you have any information as to what might have happened to that land after*
161 *they were forcibly removed and what evidence do you have regarding the movement?*
162 *How do you prove that it is forcible?*

163 BS – The people who moved out of their own village and towns, that location is the
164 best part of the vast area where they have the rivers and great place for farming.
165 People move out of their own village and move somewhere, middle of nowhere on the
166 plains. Government builds new neighbourhoods with thousands of homes, so the

167 Uyghurs inside that neighbourhood, labour camps. People work in the camps and
168 these resettlements; neighbourhoods of Uyghurs become the place where Chinese
169 government settle their own immigrants. We have all the evidence for this, Radio Free
170 Asia and other sources. If you are interested, we can provide more evidence of this.

171 *PANEL – It is taken away from them? They don't owe that land anymore?*

172 BS – They have no longer...cannot go back to village.

173 *PANEL – One imagines that the destruction of religious sites seeks to destroy*
174 *religiosity or Islam in the region. In your view, is that likely to succeed?*

175 BS – What is the question, sorry.

176 *PANEL – The destruction of religious sites is presumably to destroy the religion. Is*
177 *that likely to succeed or will the practice of Islam be practiced elsewhere? In homes?*
178 *Underground or other places? This has happened in other repressive regimes or*
179 *alleged repressive regimes.*

180 BS – You know mosques are...you know Muslims call mosques “a home”, to practice
181 Islam and join as a community and mosques are the place where Muslims with the
182 next generation...it is the place where Muslims have their own religious practice and
183 continue their culture. The question is, China...there is not a lot of people who can go
184 inside mosques. People even cannot practice religion in their home because even
185 China monitors daily living in their homes. Islam is at the time, at the moment so. I
186 don't believe China will officially erase Islam officially from the Uyghur region but China
187 is reaching their goal. Now Uyghur cannot tell by themselves, publicly that they are
188 Muslim because of this pressure. Now the Uyghur girl needs to marry the Han
189 Chinese, they cannot reject the other male Han Chinese and marry Uyghurs. In the
190 past, we said “we are Muslims, we don't marry non-Muslims" but right now people can

191 no longer say this. Based on this evidence, China is reaching their goal. They have
192 targeted Islam to erase Uyghur identity.

193 *PANEL – Can I ask a couple of questions about the demolition programme inside*
194 *Uyghur neighbourhoods? You refer to eight that you have documented. They look like*
195 *large sights. I wonder whether beyond that you have any indication on the scale of the*
196 *resettlement is? It looks like huge amounts of new housing being built there.*

197 BS – Example one is my own hometown where around 4-5 neighbourhoods were
198 around 30-40 000 Uyghurs have been living, it has been completely demolished within
199 three months. Imagine how this happened, what kind of force the government used.
200 In three months, 40 000 people moved from where they have been living for many
201 years. This is shocking. This happened to not only one town but is happening in entire
202 Uyghur region, mostly in the Southern part of the Uyghur region. I documented eight
203 of these locations, which are mostly central in the townships. The number is very
204 shocking.

205 *PANEL – And as you say, the speed of which the demolition takes place is*
206 *extraordinary. Do you know what the process is for once a site has been identified?*
207 *The process is for moving people out?*

208 BS – This is a huge action in as little as three months. You can see in as little as one
209 year after the old building have been demolished, the new buildings have been built.
210 In one year. New settlement location. New modern building. As I mentioned earlier,
211 evidence shows that around 30 000 or 40 000 people in the part of the city. Their flats
212 bulldozed. We have evidence of that with satellite imagery, not only of one location
213 but of many other locations in different cities and townships.

214 *PANEL – Are you aware of any protests or opposition against these forcible*
215 *relocations?*

216 BS – China has this system of re-education and detention and relocation of Uyghurs
217 to part of new labour towns. Uyghurs don't have rights there according to this policy.
218 These are new resettlement locations. China has made a place to put the Uyghur
219 population in. This is a man-made plan to erase Uyghur culture. This effects the
220 population growth that includes actual campaign.

221 *PANEL – So the new residence in these regions, are they entirely Han Chinese. No*
222 *Uyghurs would go back to these neighbourhoods or allowed back to these*
223 *neighbourhoods?*

224 BS – AP journalist went to a county in the Uyghur region in 2019. He sent a picture of
225 neighbourhoods; very new building. He said that he couldn't compare this to regions
226 in Inner China. There is no difference to other Chinese regions anymore, no difference
227 to Han Chinese cities. Mostly Chinese people in these locations. Chinese government
228 has a campaign to support Chinese immigrants and people moving into the Uyghur
229 towns and where are the best places to live; which part of the city or township.
230 According to the record, new Han Chinese immigrants provided home for free and
231 provided with a job so many Inner China citizens, residents who are looking for a job
232 or better life are moving in Uyghur town in Southern part of Xinjiang.

233 *PANEL – In your research on the demolition of mosques, have you seen any patterns*
234 *where the demolition maybe was particularly extensive? Any areas of the region? Or*
235 *conversely, have you seen any areas where far viewer mosques have been*
236 *demolished?*

237 BS – My research area, mosques are primary target of this demolishing because the
238 Uyghur homeland is a vast land. The distance between the townships and cities is
239 very far so that Uyghur residents practice Islam in their own township. But 80% of
240 village mosques are demolished, that is why this number is up to 15 to 60 000 and
241 then some of the iconic mosques are demolished in township and cities so the
242 population of the Uyghur region up to 95% population of Uyghur in the Southern of
243 Uyghur region and that is why more mosques were demolished in the Southern part
244 of Uyghur region compared to North. This campaign has been China demolishing
245 mosques in all of Uyghur region.

246 *PANEL – Thank you very much for attending the Tribunal to give evidence.*

247 BS – Can I have two minutes to talk about my father, please? My father, Qurban
248 Mamut, is a former editor in-chief of *Xinjiang Civilization Journal*. He was not seen in
249 the public since March 2017. My father's case highlights the faith of Uyghur
250 intellectuals. Like I mentioned earlier, 380 have been detained and my father's case
251 highlights the government's repression of culture and religion of the Uyghur region.
252 Intellectuals like my father are the ultimate target of Chinese crackdown.

253 For example, according to mainstream media, a famous writer and one of my father's
254 best friends who has been in the Chinese detention camp, still in the detention facility;
255 in a concentration camp. Another example, Uyghurs are religious scholars,
256 Muhammad Salih Hajim died in Chinese police custody at the age of 82.

257 So, these are very shocking, Uyghur intellectuals like my father are most vulnerable
258 and important people for Uyghur society. Since the disappearance of four years, I have
259 no information about my father. My father might have died or been killed in one of
260 these Uyghur locations or killed or jail. China has to provide information about my

261 father, the most vulnerable and important Uyghur, their well-being and where-about.

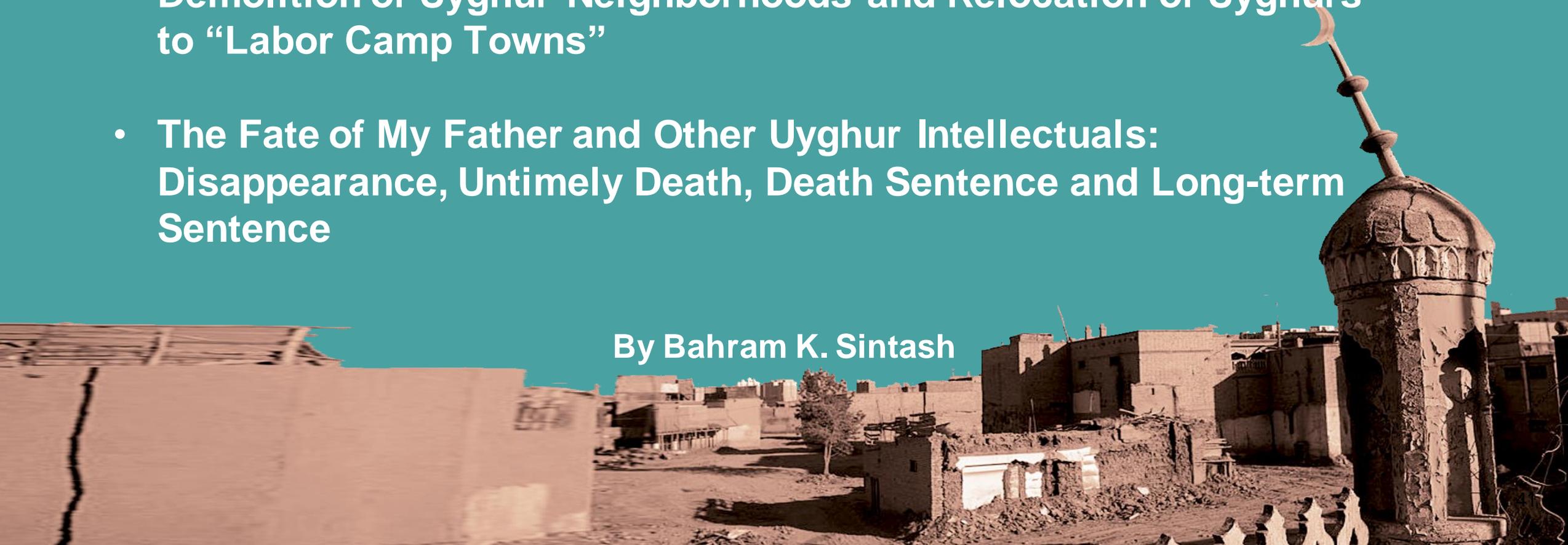
262 Are they still alive or killed? Any information, we want to know. We are demanding

263 this and need to know.

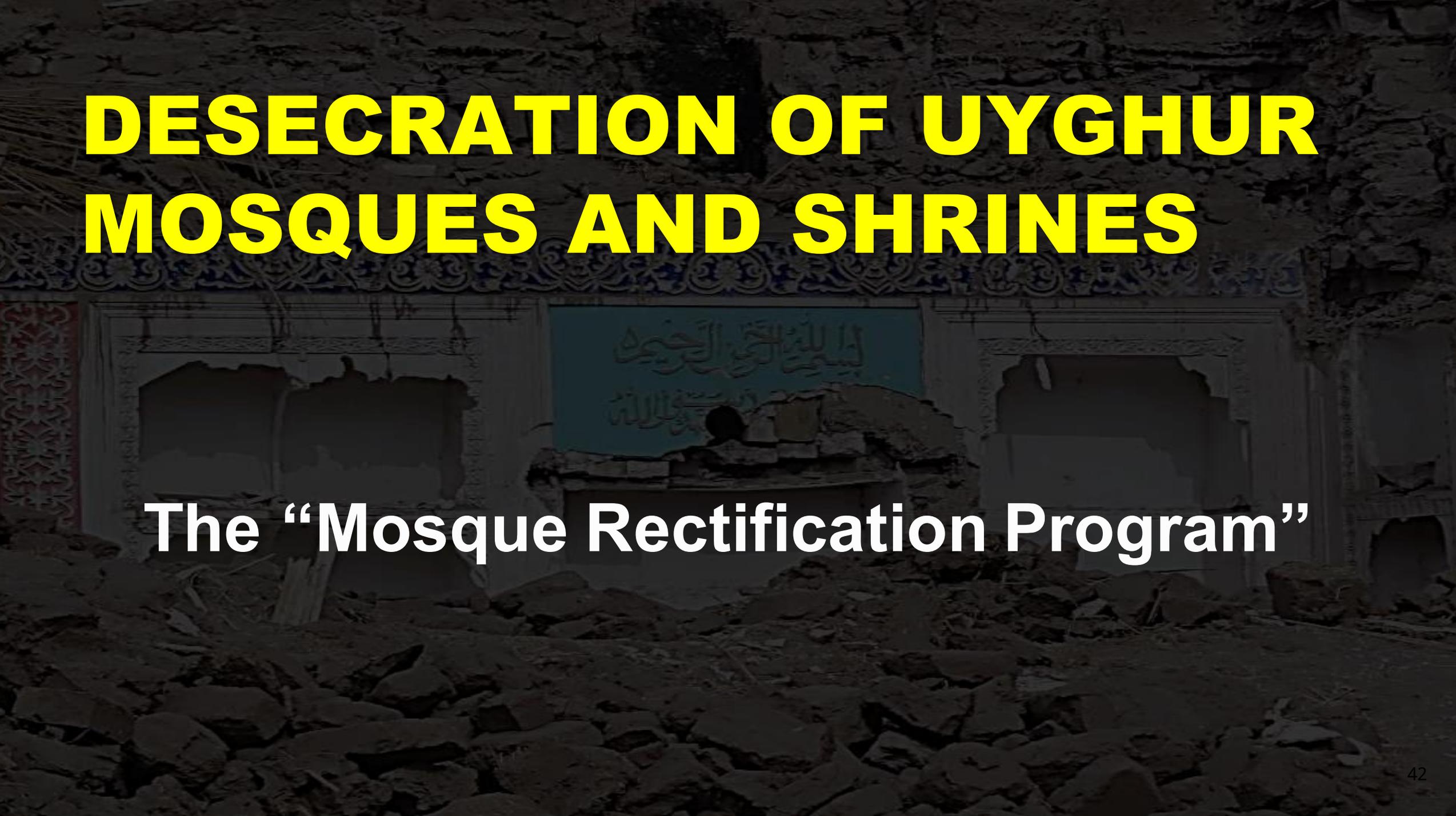
ELIMINATION OF UYGHUR IDENTITY

- The Destruction and Desecration of Uyghur Mosques and Shrines
- Demolition of Uyghur Neighborhoods and Relocation of Uyghurs to “Labor Camp Towns”
- The Fate of My Father and Other Uyghur Intellectuals: Disappearance, Untimely Death, Death Sentence and Long-term Sentence

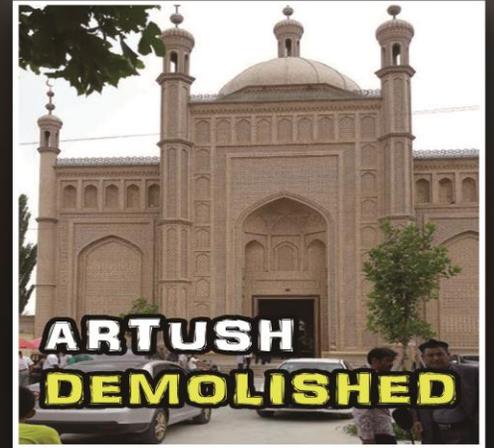
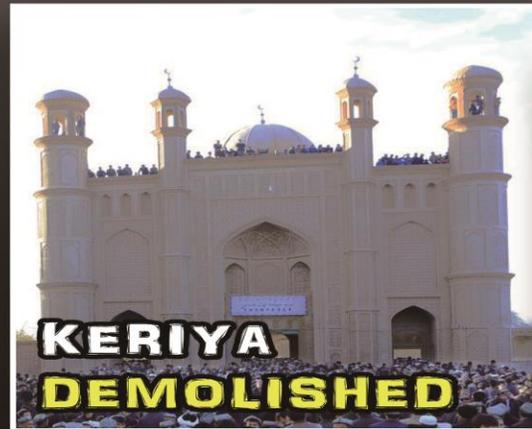
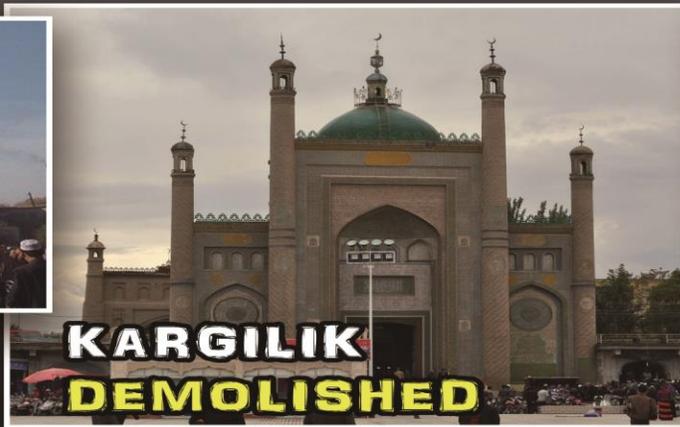
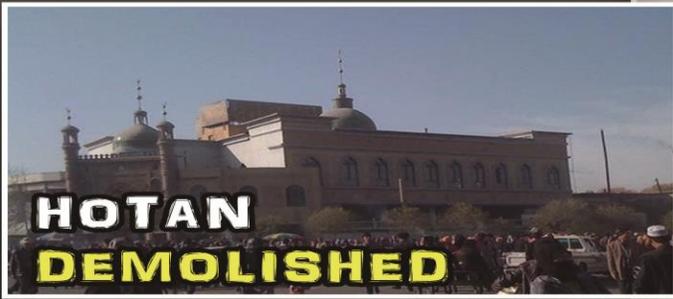
By Bahram K. Sintash



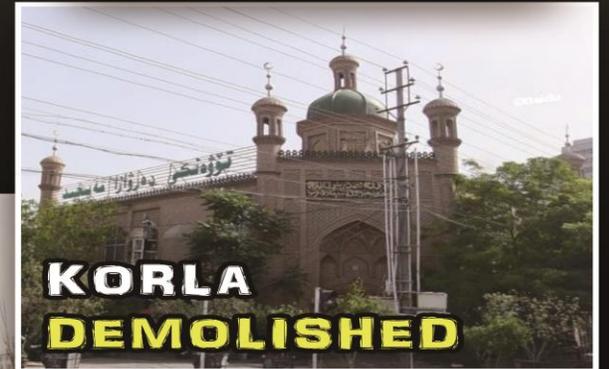
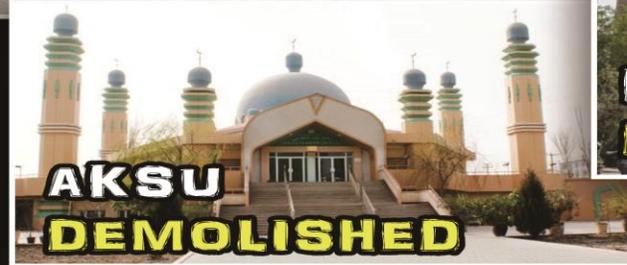
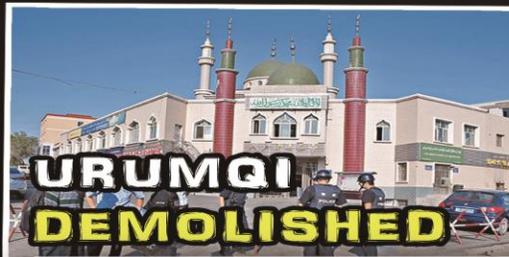
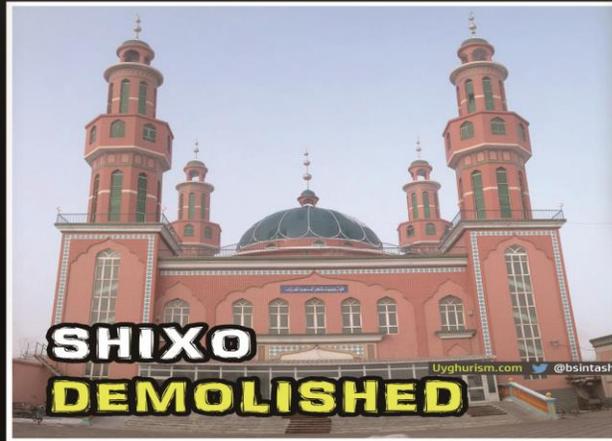
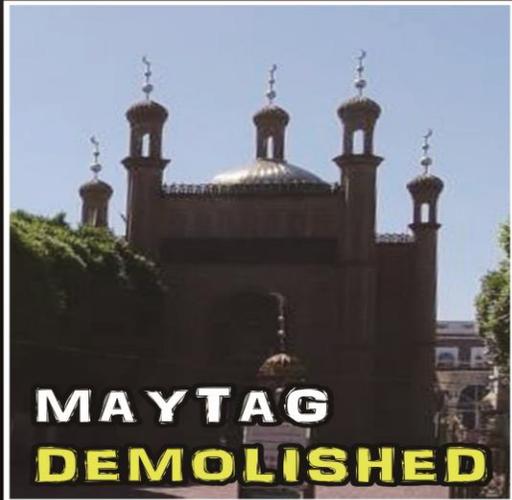
DESECRATION OF UYGHUR MOSQUES AND SHRINES

A photograph of a destroyed mosque interior. The floor is covered in rubble and debris. In the center, there is a damaged mihrab (prayer niche) with Arabic calligraphy on the wall behind it. The walls are dark and show signs of destruction. The overall scene is one of desecration and ruin.

The “Mosque Rectification Program”



UYGHURISM.COM



Large mosques in townships and cities have been demolished all around the Uyghur homeland.

How many mosques and religious sites have been demolished?

In my research in October 2019, I estimated that Chinese authorities have demolished up to 15,000 Mosques/other Islamic religious sites, including thousands of pre-demolished mosques with domes and towers destroyed; this number must have increased since then.



CHINA'S AIM: TO ERASE THE ORIGINAL LAND OWNER'S CULTURE & IDENTITY TO "GUARANTEE PEACE & STABILITY" THE IN UYGHUR HOMELAND.



11/1/2014

Image © 2019 DigitalGlobe

Google Earth

2003

Imagery Date: 11/1/2014 41°42'15.75" N 82°58'32.39" E elev 3458 ft eye alt 5893 ft

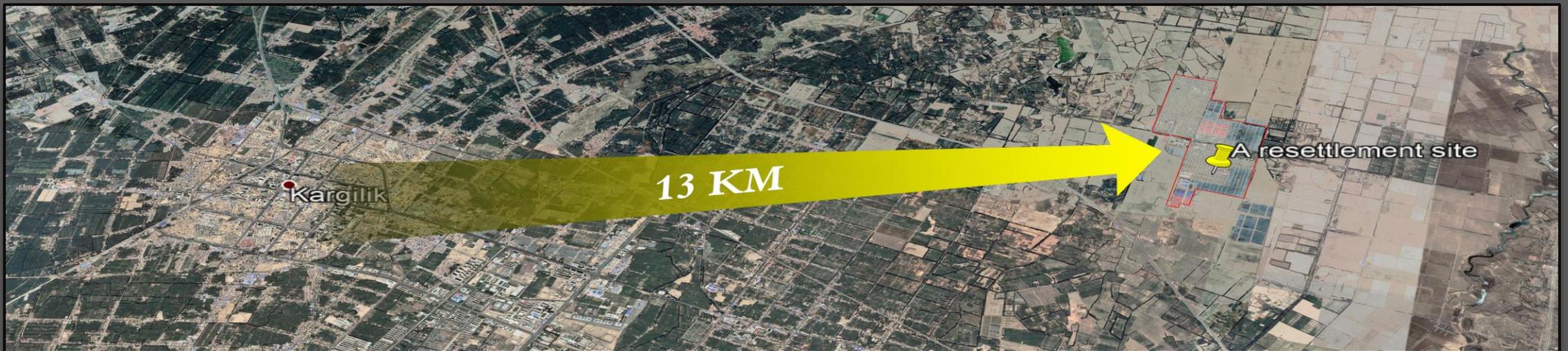
Demolishing of Uyghur Neighborhoods All around the Uyghur Homeland

Relocation of Uyghurs from their villages where they have lived for generations to the resettlement locations middle of nowhere



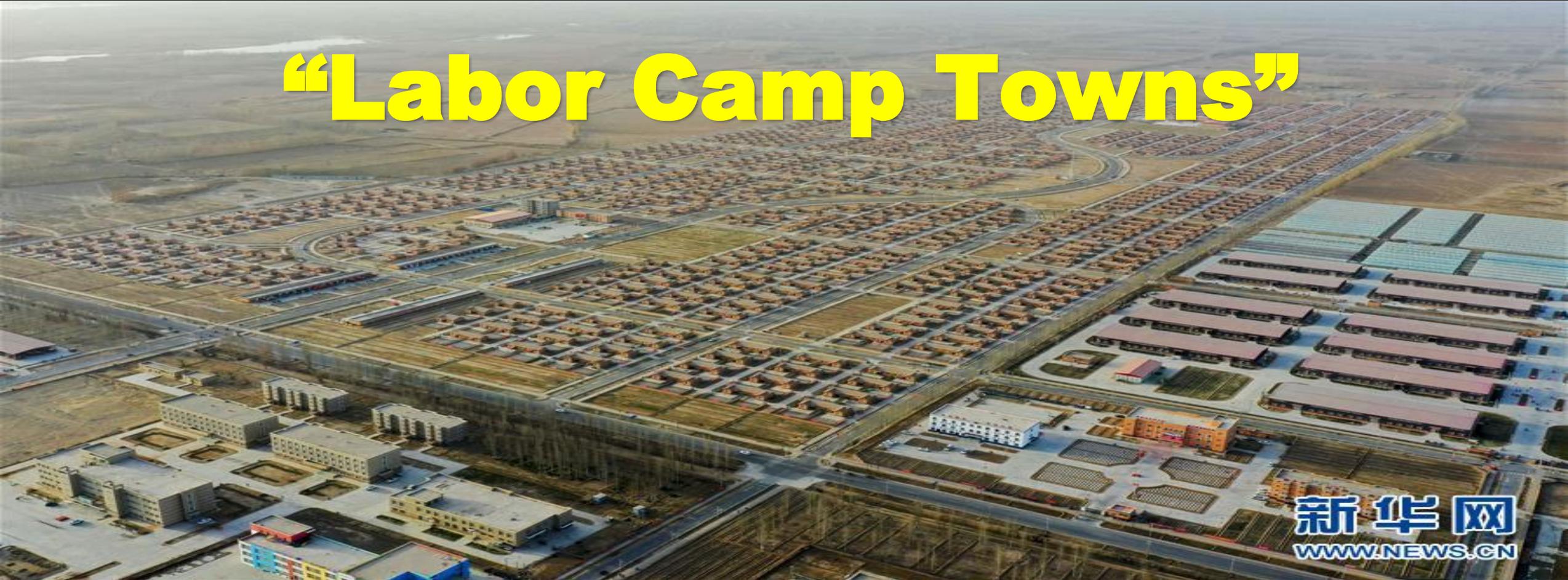


Resettlement location on a plains 50 km from Yarkant



Resettlement location in Aktash district, Kargilik

“Labor Camp Towns”



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WWW.NEWS.CN



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WWW.NEWS.CN



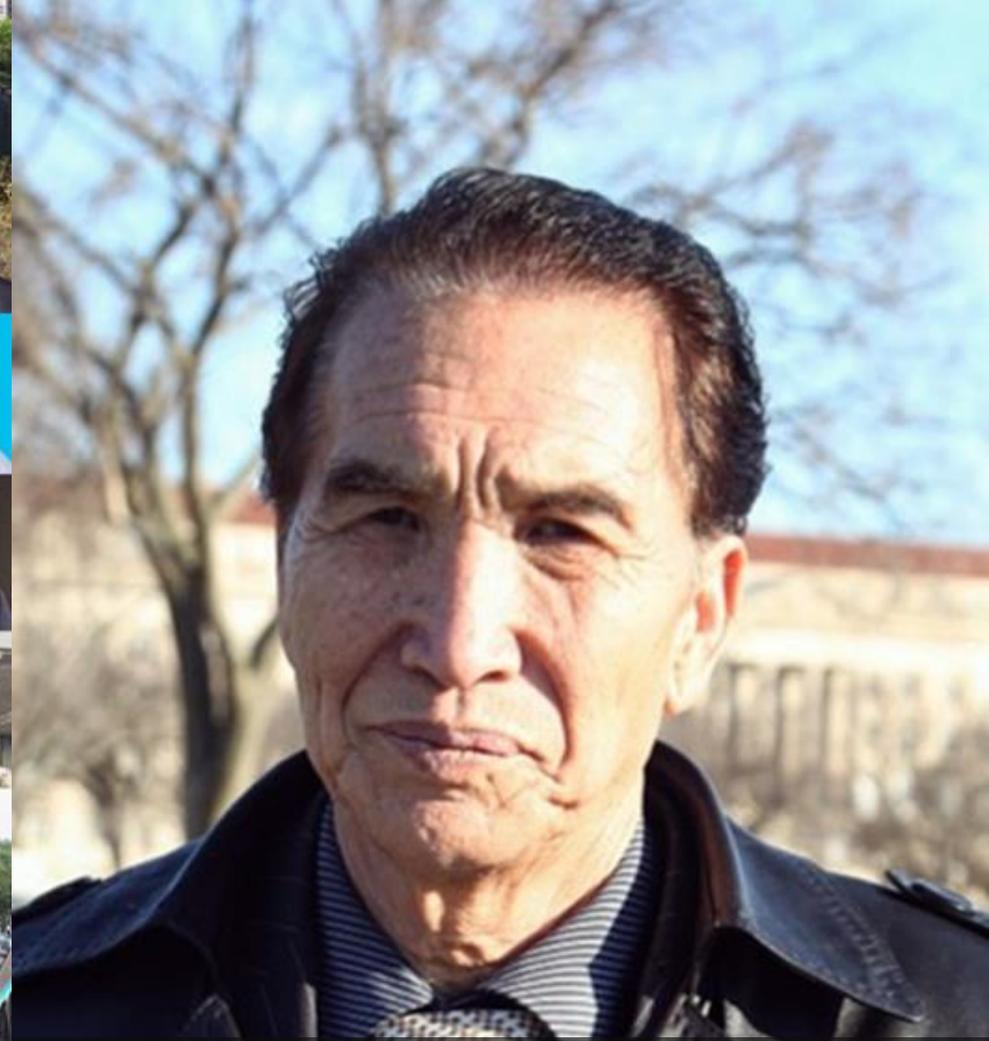
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Chinese government is transforming Uyghur towns and cities into Chinese towns suited for Han Chinese immigrants.





Qurban Mamut
Former Editor in Chief of
Xinjiang Civilization
Journal

CASE LISTS



UYGHUR INTELLECTUALS AND RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS



- **DIED** IN CUSTODY OR SHORTLY AFTER THEIR RELEASE
- SENTENCED TO **DEATH**

