

Uyghur Tribunal – Fact Witness statement

UTFW2-070 – Abida Tohtihaji

1. My name is Abida Tohtihaji and my home address is No.1 Behit Street (Xingfu lu), Mongulkore County, Ghulja City. I left in December 2013 because our freedom began to be violated. In 2011-2012, I sent my two children to kindergarten. The school forced the kids to eat something we didn't know so I asked them not to eat it. Their teacher then called me several times and said that I was not cooperating with them. When I went to school to pick up my children, I was not allowed to get close to the school gate because of the scarf I wore on my head. They wouldn't let me attend the parent meetings. We used to own a shop at Subhi Mall in Mongulkore County. Several times, the police showed up in our store and pressured me to remove the scarf from my head. Because everyone should have the freedom to decide whether or not to wear a scarf, I also wanted to protect my freedom. On the street, the policemen that were armed with guns and pistols stopped/surrounded me to check my ID and then told me that they would, without warning, directly arrest me the next time.
2. As a result, I had to go abroad at that time for the sake of my freedom and my children's education. In December 2013, I moved to Egypt with a regular Chinese passport and a normal visa. After I arrived in Egypt, I sent my children to a state-owned public school. Since, at the time, one of my children was five years old and the other was seven years old, I worked hard to offer them a good education in Egypt. Back then, my husband visited us several times and was able to return home. I also brought my children back home a couple times (during their vacations) and returned to Egypt before their school started again.

3. My husband came to Egypt in January 2016 and stayed till April 2016 which was when my husband was summoned by the authorities to go back home immediately. At the time, my husband had to go back, fearing that his parents and relatives would otherwise be in danger. I stayed in Egypt. I last visited my home at the end of April 2016. When I was there, I did not feel safe even in my own home. It was as if it had been a crime to have lived abroad. So, I moved elsewhere: Urumchi, Turpan and Hotan. We had no such thing as comfort, freedom or peace of mind. In August 2016, my husband was arrested by armed policemen from a gathering to which he had been invited as a guest. My younger daughter and my mother were also there and they asked the police where they were taking him. Instead of answering the question, however, the police warned them (while pointing their guns at other people) that they were executing a task. My husband wasn't released until the end of October 2016. The Chinese government's groundless accusation was that my husband had financially supported terrorists abroad.

4. Between 2013 to 2016, I was travelling between Egypt and home. It was normal for my husband to provide financial support for his family. It was upon those grounds that he was detained for two months. After he was released, I had to take both of my children abroad again without even telling my husband. At that time, I was pregnant with my third child and my husband was not aware of it. I had to leave because I would not have been able to give birth there - we were not allowed to have more than two children so we couldn't have a third child. If I had stayed there to wait for my third child, I would have been forced to go to the hospital to abort the child. I had to make that decision in order to bring the child to this world and to raise all my children with human rights. My husband was unaware of this. I left on the 14th of October 2016. On the 1st of April 2017, I gave birth to my third child in Egypt. On the 11th of April 2017, I heard that my husband had been arrested for the second time. At the end of 2019, about two and a half years later, I heard

that my husband had been released but then detained again a few days later. Since then, I have heard nothing of his imprisonment status or whether he is even alive.

5. Now, I want to testify about my father-in-law, Ismail Iskandar. He is about 75 years old and is an ordinary businessman who supports education. He has made donations for many, including schools. He is such a well-educated businessman. Just like my husband, he was also financially successful as a result of his business. It is probably because of this that my innocent father-in-law was also detained in 2019. I heard that he had been sentenced to nine years in prison.

6. I also want to testify for Abdujelil Abduhelil, the younger son of my brother, who is now 18 years old. Around March 2021, when he was still a school student and had not even turned 18 yet, he was arrested. As Chinese law states that anyone younger than 18 will not be sentenced, he was arrested in March and sentenced to one and a half years on May the 3rd (his 18th birthday). Two or three months later, they said they didn't know when he would be released but that it could take longer. He is not even an adult yet. He is suffering in a Chinese concentration camp. He should have a school life ahead of him. And he should have the right to live like a normal human being. This is clearly a genocide involving all Uyghur Muslims now and it is not just because of us being Muslims - China's goal is to eradicate us completely from the surface of the earth, including our ethnic name and language.

7. Next, I will testify for my sister's (Perida Ismail) husband, Abdurashid Arup (born 1985). He is a businessman and a taxi driver. I heard that he too had been illegally detained and sentenced to 30 years in prison.

8. My other sister's (Ilminur Ismail) husband, Yusuf Isa (from the Zayumku neighborhood of Ghulja City), was detained in 2016. Since then, no one has heard from him.
9. Mr. Talib Karim (about 55 years old) and Mr. Alim Karim (about 45 years old) from the 2nd Village of Mongulkore County were also detained and sentenced to 10 years in prison. I heard about this when visiting my family back home in 2015 and 2016.
10. I heard that Shohrat (my husband's friend), who lives in the 2nd Village of Mongulkore County, was also sentenced to 30 years in prison. He was said to be a man just worked and raised his children without ever getting involved in politics.
11. My uncle Mamut Kari (also known as Mumutjan), from Shihezi, was arrested in 2016. I don't know how long he was sentenced for. He has not been heard from since his arrest. His son (Muhammad Mamutjan), who is also from Shihezi, was also taken to jail in 2016 and his corpse was returned three days later. The authorities banned any community gathering for his funeral prayer. As such, my mother was unable to go to Shihezi and attend his funeral due to the restriction imposed by Chinese invaders.
12. My husband's friend, Memetjan, is 38 to 40 years old. He is also from the 2nd Village of Mongulkore Country. He was also detained and has not been heard from since then.
13. Next is Nurmuhammed Karim from the 3rd Village of Mongulkore County. He was said to be the Imam of a big mosque. He would be 40 years old, at most. He has also disappeared and his whereabouts are unknown.

14. I urge the international community and human rights organizations to make every effort to ensure that, at least, our most basic human rights are upheld. At a time in the 21st century, when everyone is supposed to be able to communicate normally with his or her family, we cannot contact our family or relatives. When our family members, relatives, neighbours or friends are arrested, we don't even have the right to ask what crimes they have committed. Therefore, I urge all human rights organizations to take action on our behalf and to truly uphold our human rights.

**I have read and understood this witness statement and I confirm that I agree with its contents
I understand that this statement will be published on the Uyghur Tribunal website and will be
available to the general public online.**

Signature:

Date: