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Question

1. Is there any evidence ethnic Uighurs in Uzbekistan face ill-treatment or are discriminated against?

RESPONSE

1. Is there any evidence ethnic Uighurs in Uzbekistan face ill-treatment or are discriminated against?

The 2003 US Department of State human rights report for Uzbekistan indicates that "as a group, the Uighurs have not suffered harassment or social or political discrimination based on their ethnic identity".[1] However, a number of sources indicate that Uighurs in Uzbekistan have experienced religious repression. In particular, the government has suppressed Uighur separatists associated with Islamic groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and the Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation) Islamic movement. In addition, China has used its influence in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), of which Uzbekistan is a member, to encourage the forcible return of Uighurs from Uzbekistan to China, where they have reportedly been tortured and/or executed.

Forcible return to China

Amnesty International's 2008 annual report explains that China gained the cooperation of its neighbouring countries which form the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, including

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[1] US Department of State 2004, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2003 – Uzbekistan*, 25 February, Section 5 – Attachment 1

Uzbekistan, in forcibly returning Uighurs to China "where they faced the death penalty and possible execution":

> China increasingly successfully used the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to pressurize neighbouring countries, including Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, to co-operate in forced returns of Uighurs to China.
>
> There was an increase in the number of Uighurs detained abroad who were forcibly sent to China, where they faced the death penalty and possible execution, including Uighurs with foreign nationality.[2]

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization has been described by Human Rights Watch as "a regional security body composed of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan", which "was established in part to address Chinese concerns about a number of small Uighur political and opposition movements that…set up organizations in the region". Since its establishment, members of the SCO "have effectively silenced independent Uighur organizations on their soil and on several occasions have repatriated refugees in response to requests by China":

> China has also been very active in enrolling the support of its Central Asian neighbors in the crackdown against Uighur ethno-nationalist aspirations. It is the driving force behind the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), a regional security body composed of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan set up in 1996 (Uzbekistan joined in 2001). The SCO was established in part to address Chinese concerns about a number of small Uighur political and opposition movements that, in the first years of independence for the former Soviet republics, set up organizations in the region, giving Uighur exiles a much closer base for their operations than the previous generation of activists, who had been based in Turkey and, later, Germany. Under pressure from Beijing, since 1996 these Central Asian countries have effectively silenced independent Uighur organizations on their soil and on several occasions have repatriated refugees in response to requests by China. Some of those repatriated refugees were executed upon their return.[3]

An article from the *Asia Times* dated 16 August 2007 claims that through the SCO, China has been able to exercise considerable political and economic influence over other member states and as a result, "has been largely successful in persuading Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to suppress the Uighur populations in their respective countries, to deport Uighur political activists and refugees fleeing Chinese persecution back to China, and to maintain official silence about the human-rights violations in East Turkestan". The article outlines a prominent example of Uzbekistan's cooperation with the repatriation of ethnic Uighurs to China, when Uighur and Canadian citizen Huseyin Celil was extradited to China on charges of terrorism while visiting relatives in Uzbekistan in 2006:

> The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has launched its largest military exercises to date in Russia's Chelyabinsk region and East Turkestan (also known as the Xinjiang Uyghur autonomous region of China). These exercises, code-named Peace Mission 2007 and based on developments in Andijan, Uzbekistan, in 2005 when Uzbek President Islam Karimov violently suppressed an uprising, involved more than 6,500 soldiers and fighter jets from member states.

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[2] Amnesty International 2008, 'Amnesty International Report 2008 – China', 28 May – Attachment 2

[3] Human Rights Watch 2005, *Devastating Blows: Religious Repression of Uighurs in Xinjiang*, April, p. 23 http://hrw.org/reports/2005/china0405/china0405.pdf – Accessed 6 February 2007 – Attachment 3

Although the stated purposes of these exercises are to improve cooperation among member states primarily in the fight against terrorism, the real objective is to intimidate the Uighur population in East Turkestan and to warn the democratic forces in Central Asia not to challenge the authoritarian regimes.

In 1996, China, Russia and three newly independent Central Asian states, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, created the Shanghai Five to resolve border issues left over after the collapse of the Soviet Union. With the addition of Uzbekistan in 2001, the Shanghai Five became known as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and has focused primarily on China's security obsessions of "terrorism, separatism and extremism". The SCO has allowed China to use political, diplomatic and economic influence to suppress Uighur opposition in East Turkestan and Central Asia.

China's policies in Central Asia are an outward projection of its fears regarding internal security, because its strategic and energy objectives are based on stability in East Turkestan. Since the founding of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, Chinese leaders have feared that these states, whose people are culturally and linguistically related to Uighurs, would sympathize with the Uighur situation and support their cause. The Chinese government views the more than 1 million Uighurs living in those countries as a threat, worrying that this population might aid Uighurs in East Turkestan to resist Chinese control of what they consider their traditional homeland.

However, after the founding of the SCO, using military and economic assistance, China has been largely successful in persuading Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to suppress the Uighur populations in their respective countries, to deport Uighur political activists and refugees fleeing Chinese persecution back to China, and to maintain official silence about the human-rights violations in East Turkestan. The increased military and economic cooperation between China and neighboring states has resulted in the repatriation and execution of Uighur activists who fled to those countries to escape Chinese persecution.

At present, SCO member and observer states not only tolerate China's repression of Uighurs in East Turkestan but also help China track down Uighur political activists and extradite them back to China to face unproved political and criminal charges. Uighur activists trying to escape the harsh repression in East Turkestan have no choice but to flee to neighboring countries, mostly China's political allies, where Beijing exerts its influence to have them forcibly returned, where they face serious human-rights violations, including torture, unfair trials and execution.

The extradition of Huseyin Celil, a Uighur-Canadian, from Uzbekistan to China in June 2006 is one of the most powerful examples of the deportation of Uighurs from Central Asian states in violation of international law. In March 2006, Celil, a charismatic Uighur imam and activist, went on a vacation with his wife to visit her parents in Uzbekistan after being granted Canadian citizenship. That June, Uzbek authorities detained Celil, reportedly at the request of the Chinese government, and later secretly extradited him to China to face charges of "terrorism".

This April, Chinese authorities sentenced Celil to life imprisonment on "terrorism" charges, denying his Canadian citizenship, prompting the highest-level Canadian protest. Celil's Canadian lawyer Chris Mcleod believes that the Chinese government, by punishing Celil, wished to send a warning to Uighur human-rights activists in exile that they will not be able "to hide behind a Canadian passport or a charter of rights, whatever other document in other countries you may have". In all cases related to the extradition of Uighur activists to China, the SCO states upheld bilateral agreements over international law.

> Today, the SCO is evolving into an anti-Uighur, anti-democratic and even anti-West military alliance of authoritarian states. Both China and Russia are increasingly opposed to US military presence in Central Asia. Therefore, Peace Mission 2007 is intended to turn the SCO into a military and political alliance to repress Uighur people's legitimate democratic and human-rights demands, to warn the local democratic forces never to dream of having any kind of "color revolutions" aimed at overthrowing the authoritarian states, and to counter a growing influence of the United States in the region.[4]

The 2008 US Department of State human rights report for China similarly describes the sentencing of Canadian citizen and ethnic Uighur Huseyin Celil to life imprisonment "after being extradited from Uzbekistan and tortured into giving a confession":

> Uighurs were sentenced to long prison terms, and in some cases executed, on charges of separatism. In April 2007 foreign citizen Huseyin Celil was sentenced to life in prison for allegedly plotting to split the country and 10 years in prison for belonging to a terrorist organization, reportedly after being extradited from Uzbekistan and tortured into giving a confession. During the year the government reportedly sought the repatriation of Uighurs living outside the country, where they faced the risk of persecution.[5]

Two separate reports from Amnesty International also describe the case of Huseyin Celil, also known as Husein Dzhelil, who was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of China, on terrorism-related charges after visiting relatives in Uzbekistan in March 2006.[6] Huseyin Celil was extradited to China on request of the Chinese authorities, who have refused to recognize his Canadian citizenship, granted on refugee grounds. Celil has claimed that he was tortured through starvation and sleep deprivation "during the first 15 days of his imprisonment", and was forced to sign a confession before being "questioned in court about his activities and those of others from the Uighur ethnic group, in Canada and in Central Asia":

> Extradition requests to the Uzbekistani authorities
>
> Husein Dzhelil, also known as Huseyin Celil, a 37-year old Canadian citizen and ethnic Uighur from the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in northwest China, was detained in March 2006 in Uzbekistan when he was visiting his relatives and handed over to the Chinese authorities at the end of June 2006. In China he has been held incommunicado, and the Chinese authorities have refused to recognize his Canadian citizenship. Husein Dzhelil fled China to Central Asia in the mid-1990s after being detained in connection with his political activities, which included advocating the rights of Uighurs, and sought asylum through the office of UNHCR in Turkey in 1999. He was recognized as a refugee and resettled to Canada, where he obtained Canadian citizenship in November 2005.
>
> Husein Dzhelil was visiting his wife's family in Uzbekistan when he was arrested on 27 March 2006. He was detained in Tashkent when he tried to get an extension to his visa. The authorities did not tell his family, who are also Canadian citizens, why they had detained him. Representatives of the Canadian government were allowed to meet him for the first time on 14 April for 20 minutes. They were reportedly only granted a further two visits, with the last meeting taking place on 8 May. His lawyer was reportedly denied access to him as were his

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[4] Seytoff, A. 2007, 'SCO exercise 'aimed at suppressing Uighurs'', *Asia Times*, 16 August – Attachment 4

[5] US Department of State 2009, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2008 – China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau)*, 25 February, Section 5 – Attachment 5

[6] Amnesty International (undated), 'China: Reports that Husein Dzhelil Sentenced To 15 years' http://asiapacific.amnesty.org/apro/aproweb.nsf/pages/appeals_china_ua9906 – Accessed 22 November 2006 – Attachment 6

> relatives who were only allowed to pass on food, clothes and money. Amnesty International learned that he was held in Kuiluk detention facility near Tashkent from the end of April or beginning of May. When his father-in-law went to deliver a food parcel on 9 June, the prison guards reportedly told him that officers from the National Security Service had taken Husein Dzhelil to an unknown location. It later emerged that he had been forcibly returned to China.
>
> In February 2007 trial proceedings against Husein Dzhelil started before a court in Urumqi, the capital of the XUAR. In court Husein Dzhelil claimed that his earlier confession had been extracted through torture. According to those close to him, he claimed that he was tortured after his extradition to China in June 2006, including by being starved and deprived of sleep during the first 15 days of his imprisonment. He also claimed that Chinese authorities threatened that he would "disappear" and "be buried alive" unless he signed a document. This document was later held up as a confession, although Husein Dzhelil reportedly later claimed he did not know what he had signed. Husein Dzhelil's trial was attended by his family members in XUAR, and by Chinese officials. The authorities had previously indicated that he was being investigated for activities related to "terrorism", but it appears that no charges were read out at his trial. Instead, he was reportedly questioned in court about his activities and those of others from the Uighur ethnic group, in Canada and in Central Asia.[7]

Human Rights Watch's world report released in 2007 also describes the deportation of Uighurs from neighbouring countries to China, including the case of Huseyin Celil mentioned above:

> In 2006, China continued to pressure neighbouring countries to arrest and deport politically active Uighurs. In June 2006, Uzbekistan extradited to China Huseyin Celil, a Uighur and a Canadian citizen. At this writing, Celil was being held in Xinjiang with no access to Canadian consular services. In May 2006, Kazakhstan acceded to China's demand that it extradite two Uighurs. In October, China sentenced Ismail Semed to death for "separatism" following his deportation from Pakistan. China also pressed hard, though unsuccessfully, to get Albania to repatriate five Uighurs who, until 2006, had been held by the US at Guantanamo Bay.[8]

A news article dated 8 April 2004 and cited on the Uyghur Human Rights Project website describes a joint agreement between Chinese President Hu Jintao and Uzbek President Islam Karimov, which involves Uzbekistan agreeing to China's demands to repress the activities of Uighurs that advocate human rights and support Uighur demands for greater political and cultural rights in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region:

> On June 15, 2004, Chinese President Hu Jintao visited Uzbekistan to take part in the summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which is scheduled to begin on June 16 in Tashkent. During the visit, Hu and his Uzbek counterpart Islam Karimov signed a joint statement on further developing a partnership of friendly cooperation between their two countries. According to the joint statement, "China and Uzbekistan agreed that terrorism, separatism, and extremism still pose a major threat to regional security and stability. China and Uzbekistan will, in accordance with Shanghai Cooperation Organization on Combating Terrorism , Separatism and Extremism and the China-Uzbekistan Agreement on Cooperation in Combating Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism, further strengthen coordination and cooperation among relevant agencies of both countries and continue to adopt powerful measures to fight all forms of terrorism, including terrorism waged buy the so-called "East Turkistan terror groups" in order to engender peace and tranquility in the two countries and in

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[7] Amnesty International 2007, 'Central Asia: Summary of Human Rights Concerns January 2006 – March 2007', 26 March – Attachment 7

[8] Human Rights Watch 2007, *World Report 2007: Events of 2006*, p. 265 http://hrw.org/wr2k7/ – Accessed 6 February 2007 – Attachment 8

> the region. The two countries agreed that the crackdown on the "terrorist forces of East Turkistan" is a major part of the international anti-terrorism campaign ".
>
> China also announced it would give Central Asian countries US$900million in credits and gave Uzbekistan about US$2.5 million in humanitarian assistance.
>
> According to Uyghur intellectuals in Uzbekistan, Uzbek authorities will strengthen their control over any activities of Uyghurs in Uzbekistan and other Central Asian republics. New Sino-Uzbek cooperation against the Uyghur movement for independence and democracy will cast a dark shadow over the future of Uyghur people.

The article also provides some background information on Uighurs in Uzbekistan, and explains that Uzbekistan has employed the most repressive actions against Uighurs among the Central Asian countries, severely curtailing their freedom of speech and freedom to carry out human rights campaigns. In addition, it is argued that "[a]fter joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization [in 2001], the Uzbek government quickly responded to the call of Chinese government to crack down on terrorism, ethnic separatism and religious fundamentalism…[including] Uyghur independence movements":

> Uzbekistan is one of the countries in Central Asia, which has a large number of the Uyghur diaspora. Uzbekistan's stance on this matter is unique in Central Asia. Although other Central Asian countries, particularly Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, have also curtailed and limited Uyghur movements of the same character, they did allow Uyghurs to carry out some activity within the boundary of their existing laws. However, Uzbekistan has not given any chance for Uyghurs to organize in support of their ethnic brothers in East Turkistan.
>
> Uzbekistan's stance on this issue is not new. It is a historical fact that the Ferghana Valley has been a rear base for the Uygur national liberation movement since the 19th century. Uzbek - Uyghur relations in the fields of politics, economics, and culture has affected Uygur liberation movements throughout history. Well aware of these facts, Uzbek authorities, just after the country's independence, closely monitored the Uyghur movements that were gaining momentum in its territory. Fearing that Uyghur movements in Uzbekistan, which are aimed at supporting the Uyghurs' struggle against the Chinese government, would negatively affect Sino-Uzbek relations, the Uzbek government has clamped down on the Uyghur movements since independence.
>
> The Uygurs of Uzbekistan have made significant contributions to the development of social, economic, and cultural life in Uzbekistan. Today, as citizens of Uzbekistan, they are faithfully fulfilling their civic duties and roles. However, the Uyghurs in Uzbekistan are currently going through rough times. Just like other people in Uzbekistan, their freedom of speech and expression are severely curtailed by the current Uzbek regime. Their freedom to carry out political and human rights campaigns aimed at supporting the political, social, and cultural rights of their ethnic brethren in East Turkistan is particularly severely restricted. Uyghurs thus feel the need of democratization in Uzbekistan even stronger.
>
> Following the intensification of economic and political relations between Uzbekistan and China and the entry of Uzbekistan into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Uyghurs' problem has increasingly come under the spotlight. The Uzbek government has prohibited pro-Uygur and anti-Chinese messages in the state and any other media outlets. According to some Uyghurs in Uzbekistan, who asked not to be identified, the Uyghur press in Uzbekistan has encountered severe restrictions. The Uzbek press refuses to publish papers, in which the political problems of the Uyghurs are mentioned. Furthermore, the importing of books and newspapers and any other publications concerning to East Turkistan, which are published in Turkey, Germany and other countries, is now prohibited. Hence, there is no publishing house

in Uzbekistan that publishes literature in the Uyghur language. Only a short Uyghur service is allowed on Uzbek Radio and is conducted under strict control. Actually the Uyghur radio service was created in 1947 and used as a tool for its anti-China purposes. The current Uyghur radio service is the continuation of that old service but operates under a very different mandate. Anything about Uyghur human rights issues or political problems in East Turkistan is not allowed to be broadcast.

The restrictions on the Uyghur movement in Uzbekistan came into force in 1994 after the visit of Chinese premier Li Peng to the country and the signing of a bilateral agreement between the two governments. Since then, establishment of Uyghur organizations that advocate human rights and independence for the people in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region is prohibited. Therefore, there are currently no Uyghur political organizations in Uzbekistan. Only the Uyghur Cultural Center is functioning as a non-political organization. This is in sharp contrast to other Central Asian Republics, specifically Kirghizstan and Kazakhstan, where Uyghurs are allowed to organize into political organizations. According to some Uyghur intellectuals in Uzbekistan, who wanted to remain anonymous, Uygurs are not even allowed to participate in conferences and meetings about Uygur issues which are held in other countries. The Uzbekistan government considers any pro-Uyhgur activities in Uzbekistan or by Uzbek citizens as harmful to Sino-Uzbek relations and Uzbek national interests. After joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Uzbek government quickly responded to the call of Chinese government to crack down on terrorism, ethnic separatism and religious fundamentalism. By actively supporting China's crackdown on Uyghur independence movements, Uzbekistan wanted to get China's help in its own fight against Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.

As a people united by its national origin, history, culture and tradition, Uyghurs have a relatively long history in Uzbekistan. From the second half of eighteenth century they began migrating to the land which is now called Uzbekistan.

…The exact number of Uygur population in Central Asia has been a very contentious issue…Today, there is no official data on the number of Uyghurs in Uzbekistan, however, Uygur intellectuals in Uzbekistan assert that a great number of Uyghurs live in Uzbekistan. One member of the Uygur Cultural Center of Uzbekistan said that approximately 200,000 Uygurs live in Uzbekistan. And according to a Uyghur professor of the Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences, who did not to be named, there are approximately 500,000 Uyghurs currently living in Uzbekistan.

…Today, the Uyghurs are recognized as an ethnic minority in the Republic of Uzbekistan. However, their right to establish cultural and political organizations was severely restricted and vehemently opposed by the Uzbek government. Uyghurs in Uzbekistan are not allowed to form or join political organizations that advocate independence for Xinjiang. Uyghurs are even restricted from attending political activities in other countries, which is related the East Turkistan. As a result, there are no Uyghur political or social organizations in Uzbekistan which advocate and support human rights and greater political and cultural rights for Uygurs in East Turkistan. The Uyghur movement in Uzbekistan is in a stage of hibernation.

…After September 11, China is using its economic power to strengthen cooperation with Central Asian countries and crack down on Uyghur political activities in the region, under the false cover of fighting terrorism, separatism, and extremism.[9]

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[9] Tarimi, N. T. 2004, 'Disappearing Diaspora in Uzbekistan', Uyghur Human Rights Project website, source: BakyToday.net, 8 April http://www.uhrp.org/articles/153/1/Disappearing-Diaspora-in-Uzbekistan/Disappearing-Diaspora-in-Uzbekistan.html - Accessed 25 November 2009 – Attachment 9

An *IRIN News* article dated 7 December 2004 similarly states that the September 11 terrorist attacks prompted China to portray Uighurs as separatists and terrorists linked to extremist Islamic groups in the region. As such, China has encouraged Central Asian countries such as Uzbekistan "to exert tighter control over their Uighur minorities". The article also claims that Uighurs in Uzbekistan have fewer freedoms than those in other Central Asian countries:

> "For our father [President Islam Karimov] there is no such nation as Uighurs in Uzbekistan," Dilshad (not his real name), a 29-year-old Uighur, told IRIN in the capital, Tashkent.
>
> Uighurs are a Turkic, Sunni Muslim people, with close cultural and linguistic ties to other ethnic groups in Central Asia, including Kyrgyz, Kazakhs, Uzbeks and Turkmen.
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> "I will never be chair of our department because I am an ethnic Uighur," said another ethnic Uighur who works in one of the government bodies.
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> Uzbekistan is one of the most homogenous states in Central Asia, where according to official statistics, Uzbeks comprise more than 75 percent of the country's 25 million population.
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> Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Uzbekistan started the policy of nation-state building, which resulted in the fact that Uzbeks became dominant over ethnic minorities, local observers say.
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> Although Uighurs have been living in the country for centuries, there are no official statistics regarding their number in the former Soviet republic. Latest Soviet statistics available indicate that there were 37,000 Uighurs in Uzbekistan before 1991, however many Uighur activists say the real number is much higher. The majority of Uighurs live in major cities, including Tashkent and Andijan, as well as Tashkent province.
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> "We cannot say the exact number of Uighurs living in Uzbekistan, we sent letters to provincial administrations to count this number," Sultanmurad aka, the chair of the Uighur Cultural Centre of Uzbekistan, told IRIN in Tashkent.
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> The issue of the Uighur Diaspora is very sensitive due to close relations between Tashkent and Beijing. The emergence of five newly independent states in Central Asia following the collapse of the Soviet Union stimulated a separatist movement among the Uighur minority in neighbouring China's Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR).
>
> Since the 11 September attacks on the US, Chinese officials have portrayed Uighur radicals in Xinjiang as separatists and terrorists with links to a range of extremist Islamic groups throughout Central Asia, pressing regional countries to exert tighter control over their Uighur minorities.
>
> Earlier this year, Chinese President Hu Jintao visited Tashkent to participate in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit. The SCO is a regional security and cooperation body comprising China, Russia and the ex-Soviet Central Asian republics except Turkmenistan.
>
> During this visit, the two presidents signed a joint statement on further developing partnership between the two countries.
>
> According to the statement, China and Uzbekistan agreed that terrorism, separatism and extremism still pose a major threat to regional security and stability. "China and Uzbekistan

> will continue to adopt powerful measures to fight all forms of terrorism, including terrorism waged by the so-called East Turkistan terrorist groups, the statement said.
>
> While the situation with regard to Uighurs in other Central Asian states is more liberal, where they can establish political, human rights organisations and different foundations, Uighurs in Uzbekistan are deprived of those rights. "There is no Uighur political organisation in Uzbekistan," Sultanmurad aka conceded.
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> Compared with their ethnic brethren in other Central Asian states, Uighurs in Uzbekistan are only allowed to work in the area of culture and the Uighur Cultural Centre is the main body in that sphere.
>
> "The main aim of our organisation [Uighur Cultural Centre] is preserving our language and culture. This year we invited the Uighur Theatre from Kazakhstan, thus we started to communicate with other Uighur cultural organisations from other Central Asian states," Sultanmurad aka said.
>
> The centre also started opening its branches in places where Uighurs live. "We have 260 Uighur families. We try and preserve our language and traditions, though our children have started to speak in Uzbek. It is really good that now we have a branch of the Uighur Centre, we hope to open Uighur language classes here with its help," Farhad Usmonov, newly elected head of the branch of Uighur Cultural Centre in Uchhoz village, Tashkent province, told IRIN.
>
> Uighur classes are taught in Kim Pen Hva village, 50 km from Tashkent. "In our village there are 127 Uighur families, we have Uighur language classes," Kiym aka, a local community leader, told IRIN.
>
> "Now Uighurs have a higher profile, we feel that there is more attention towards us," an Uighur leader told IRIN. "If we can use the current government policy towards minorities correctly, we can get huge benefits," he said.
>
> However, many ethnic Uighurs are still afraid to speak out or to be identified. When asked about the issue of Uighurs in the country they constantly avoid talking about it.
>
> But some are optimistic. "I hope that in the future Uighurs will not disappear in Uzbekistan and our children can say they are Uighurs," Ahmad aka, an elderly Uighur, told IRIN, looking at his children.[10]

In addition, the 2002 Reporters Without Borders annual report for Uzbekistan indicates that "all news comes from and is validated by the state, no commentary is allowed in the press about the existence of an opposition, criminality, corruption and the various questions relating to the respect of freedom, individual rights and minorities (especially the Uighur)".[11]

Uighur separatists with links to Islamic movements

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[10] 'Uzbekistan: Uighur Minority Demands More Political Rights' 2004, Uyghur Human Rights Project website, source: IRIN News, 7 December http://www.uhrp.org/articles/133/1/Uzbekistan-Uighur-Minority-Demands-More-Political-Rights/Uzbekistan-Uighur-Minority-Demands-More-Political-Rights.html – Accessed 25 November 2009 – Attachment 10

[11] Reporters Without Borders 2002, 'Reporters Without Borders Annual Report 2002 – Uzbekistan', UNHCR Refworld website, 3 May http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?page=search&docid=487c525d28&skip=0&query=uighur%20uzbekistan – Accessed 27 November 2009 – Attachment 11

The US Department of State human rights report for 2003 indicates that "as a group, the Uighurs have not suffered harassment or social or political discrimination based on their ethnic identity", despite government suppression of Uighur separatists associated with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU):

> In the past, the Government's suppression of groups and individuals tied to the IMU included a small number of Uighur separatists, primarily from China, who fought with the IMU in Afghanistan. However, as a group, the Uighurs have not suffered harassment or social or political discrimination based on their ethnic identity. Linguistically, Uighur is extremely close to Uzbek. Intermarriage was common, and the Uighurs were widely considered to be quite prosperous. There were no barriers professionally, including in government service. The Government has been generally supportive of Uighur cultural activities.[12]

The 2005 HRW report cited above also indicates that an Islamic Uighur movement known as Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation), which is illegal in China, "is the object of rigorous repression in Uzbekistan":

> Recent reports suggest that Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation), a movement which advocates the establishment of a pan-Central Asian caliphate and whose headquarters is located in London, has recently made inroads in Southern Xinjiang, but it has so far never advocated violence. Hizb ut-Tahrir is the object of rigorous repression in Uzbekistan and other Central Asian countries. It remains illegal in China.[13]

The US Department of State human rights report on Uzbekistan for 2001 describes the arrest and suspicious death of "Emin Usman, a prominent writer and an ethnic Uighur, on charges of possessing illegal religious literature and belonging to the banned Hizb ut-Tahrir Islamic political party":

> On February 21, police arrested Emin Usman, a prominent writer and an ethnic Uighur, on charges of possessing illegal religious literature and belonging to the banned Hizb ut-Tahrir Islamic political party. Police returned Usman's body to relatives on March 1. Authorities, who claimed that Usman had committed suicide, ordered the body buried immediately and would not allow family members to view it; however, one family member who did view the body reported that it bore clear signs of having been beaten.[14]

A 2001 article outlines a similar case in which a Uighur writer was killed in an Uzbekistan jail after being charged with "propagating Wahhabism", described in a US Congressional Research Service report as "a puritanical form of Sunni Islam":

> Uighur writer Eminzhan Osmanov was recently murdered in jail in Uzbekistan by Uzbek National Security Committee staffers, RFE/RL's Almaty bureau reported on 9 March, quoting Yusufbek Mukhlisi, the leader of the Almaty-based National Front for the Liberation of Eastern Turkistan.
>
> Osmanov's body, which bore traces of beatings and torture, was handed over to his relatives in Tashkent on 2 March with orders that he should be buried immediately.

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[12] US Department of State 2004, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2003 – Uzbekistan*, 25 February, Section 5 – Attachment 1

[13] Human Rights Watch 2005, *Devastating Blows: Religious Repression of Uighurs in Xinjiang*, April, p. 13 http://hrw.org/reports/2005/china0405/china0405.pdf – Accessed 6 February 2007 – Attachment 3

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A former head of the Uighur section of the Writers' Union of Uzbekistan, Osmanov was arrested last year and charged with propagating Wahhabism[15] ["a puritanical form of Sunni Islam"].[16]

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