

Written Testimony of Gulbahar Haitiwaji
Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party
March 23, 2023
Hearing on the Chinese Communist Party's Ongoing Uyghur Genocide

Thank you, Chair Gallagher and Ranking Member Krishnamoorthi for inviting me to speak at this hearing. Thank you to all of you for being here.

My name is Gulbahar Haitiwaji. I am Uyghur.

From January 2017 to March 2019, I was held in 2 reeducation camps and police stations. From March 2019 to August 2019, I was held in an apartment with police surveillance until I left China for France, having been finally declared innocent by a court after these years that were robbed from me.

I was living in France when Chinese officials called me back to Xinjiang under the guise of signing paperwork regarding my retirement pension. In spite of the whispers of a brutal crackdown on our people, I believed I would be safe because I was living abroad, with foreign family members. I never participated in any activities that might be deemed political or against the Chinese government. I expected to be questioned as was standard practice by Chinese officials. But upon arriving at the appropriate police station in Kunlun to complete the paperwork, I was shown a photograph of my daughter, Gulhumar, at a Uyghur demonstration in France. The police called her a terrorist. All of my protests were futile, and I spent 5 months detained in police cells in Karamay. During that time I endured constant interrogations and brutalities. I was chained to my bed for 20 days as punishment once. After these five months I was transferred to what they called a school. My cellmate at the jail told me it was a normal school with Han Chinese instructors and after we completed our studies we would be able to go. This was not true.

Upon arriving at the first so-called school on the outskirts of Karamay, I could see barbed wire fencing and only the desert surrounding.

The rooms we were kept in had bunk beds, a bucket to serve as a toilet, and cameras panning the room. There was no mattress, no toilet paper, no sheets, nowhere to wash.

We were fearful of speaking because of the constant watch of the guards. The days exhausted me and the guards were brutal. The worst part was imagining my husband, Kerim, and my two daughters. Did they know where I was?

Within the camps, each day we would endure 11 hours of Chinese language instruction. We began each day with a pledge of sorts to China. We would say, “Thank you to our great country. Thank you to our party. Thank you to our dear President Xi Jinping.” We ended each day by saying “I wish for my great country to develop and have a bright future. I wish for all ethnicities to form a single great nation. I wish good health to Xi Jinping. Long live Xi Jinping.” During my time in these places, I felt I was losing my sense of self, losing my ability to even remember the faces of my family members. When my head was shaved, I was certain I would be executed. When I was given mysterious vaccinations, I was certain they were poisoning us, although it became clear later that they were sterilizing us. Instead of killing us swiftly, the tactics being used were to make us slowly disappear.

I was interrogated multiple times. The police told me that the sooner I confessed to my supposed crimes, the sooner I would be able to leave. I gave in. I was so exhausted from the constant blows.

I know how blessed I am to be out. Who am I to have had my life spared, while so many were left behind? I owe this largely to my family abroad who fought hard for my release. And now, I owe it to those who languish there still to speak to you now.

So, I am asking the United States government to do the following:

Pass more laws to end our suffering and hold those responsible accountable.

Please rescue Uyghur and other Turkic refugees, like Canada has done.

Please stop American companies from continuing to be complicit in surveilling our people and profiting from their labor.

Please stop pension fund investments in China’s high-tech surveillance companies. I was shocked to learn that Americans are pouring their money into Dahua, Hikvision, Huawei, Tencent, and others that we are familiar with as being the power behind the Chinese State’s heavy hand over our lives.

Thank you for allowing me to share this with you: the truth of the nature of the regime that you feed with your dollars and empower with your silence is in our stories. Please listen and act. We have paid a price too heavy to ignore.