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The Current Situation of Uyghurs Living in Japan and the Measures the Japanese Government Should Take

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Japan Uyghur Association is a non-profit organization whose members include Uyghurs (East Turkistan) living in Japan as well as Japanese people who are interested in the human rights issues of Uyghurs.

The Current Situation of Uyghurs Living in Japan and the Measures the Japanese Government Should Take

1. Relevant Articles of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

Articles 12, 13, and 17

2. Main Point

The concern of Uyghurs currently being held in detention camps in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in China on a large scale (some say more than one million Uyghurs) was pointed out by 23 countries, including Japan, the U.S., and the U.K., at the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly on July 29.

While many Uyghurs living in Japan are on student visas with Chinese passports, the Chinese Embassy in Japan refuses to renew their passports in Japan and orders them to return to China. There have been cases in which Uyghurs who returned to China were put into detention camps, or had their passports confiscated and were deprived of their freedom to leave the country.

Uyghurs living in Japan also cannot contact their families back home or confirm their safety. They have their families forcibly placed in detention camps, are threatened by China, and are forced to provide information about Uyghurs living in Japan. Uyghurs with Japanese nationality are in the same situation.

These are violations of the right to freedom of movement and freedom to leave any country under Article 12 of Part III; the right to freedom from arbitrary interference and attack on private life, family, housing, or communications under Article 17 of Part III; and the treatment of aliens, including refugees and asylum-seekers under Article 13 of Part III of the ICCPR. While the Chinese government is responsible for this, Japan should have a responsibility to protect Uyghurs living in Japan and their human rights.

3. Current Situation

The following are public testimonies given by Uyghurs living in Japan at the House of Councilors to the press on September 30, 2019.

All testifiers are related to our association, and their names are disclosed with their consent.

(Testimony 1) Afumetto Retepu, male, 40s, resident in Tokyo, Japanese national

In 2017, 12 relatives living in my hometown, including my father and younger brother, were detained by public security officials. In February 2018, I lost contact with my mother. Then, a month later, in March, a video of my father was suddenly sent to my cell phone. The sender was written as "Local public security official". Father, who I saw for the first time in a year, wasn't wearing the native Uyghur hat that he wore every day, and had shaved off his beard, which an elderly Muslim man typically grows.

Later, a man claiming to be a "local public safety official" sent a voice message to my cell phone. "Even if you are not directly involved in the Uyghur organization in Japan, you should be aware of the situation. If you stand with us on our country's side and cooperate with us, your family's problems will soon be solved." They held my family in my hometown hostage and demanded that I cooperate with them in spying on the Uyghur organization in Japan by passing on its inside information to China.

This dialogue was broadcasted as news on NHK. (Please refer to the following link).

<https://www9.nhk.or.jp/nw9/digest/2019/07/0705.html>

(Testimony 2) Uda Kerimu, male, 40s, resident in Saitama Prefecture, Japanese national

My oldest brother was detained in January 2018. He was released in May 2019 but has been under constant surveillance. His wife was also detained at the same time and is still missing.

(Testimony 3) Ismail, male, 30s, resident in Chiba Prefecture, Chinese national

I have lost contact with my family since 2017. My elder brother was detained, and the whereabouts of his two children are unknown.

(Testimony 4) Gulistan Eziz, female, 30s, resident in Chiba Prefecture, Japanese national

My younger brother was incarcerated in 2017, and I have lost contact with him since then. At present, I also have no contact with my mother or my sister's family at all. My younger

brother's dream was to study in Japan, but he cannot make that dream come true.

(Testimony 5) Saijio Ken, male, 40s, resident in Saitama Prefecture, Japanese national

In March 2017, my elder brother and his wife were detained, and I haven't been able to contact them since then. My father passed away in May due to an illness, but I cannot even know if my brother and his wife know about it.

(Testimony 6) Muharram Muhammad'ali, male, 20s, resident in Chiba Prefecture, Chinese national

My father went missing in Turpan on March 24, 2017, after being called for a meeting. In October of the same year, I read my father's letter sent from prison and found that he had been sentenced to six years in prison. His trial was a completely secret one, my family was not informed of it, and he was not even given the right to a lawyer.

(Testimony 7) Halmat Rouzi, male, 40s, resident in Chiba Prefecture, Chinese national

In May 2020, I received a video call from my brother back home. My brother repeatedly asked me if I had participated in any protest activities that criticized the Chinese government. Just as I was about to finish my conversation with him, a stranger suddenly appeared on the screen and spoke to me.

"China is your homeland forever. I want to make friends with you and talk about many things."

The man only said he belonged to a government organization and asked for information on the activities of the Uyghur organization in Japan.

The second video call came four weeks later.

My brother said, "Someone from the National Security Agency wants to talk to you." A man claiming to be an official of the National Security Agency asked me for information on the movement of Uyghurs in Japan, and said he would help me settle in Japan and obtain Japanese nationality if I cooperated with him.

This dialogue was broadcasted as news on NHK. (Please refer to the following link).

<https://www.nhk.or.jp/kokusaihoudou/archive/2020/06/0629.html>

The testimonies given above indicate that Uyghurs living in Japan, including those with Japanese nationality, have had their families held in detention camps and have been forced to provide information under threat by China, and at the same time have been deprived of the right to see their families and to be reunited with them.

4. Proposed Recommendations

Petitions from Japan Uyghur Association to the Japanese Government

- (1) From the perspective of protecting Japanese nationals, we request that the Japanese government urge the Chinese government to correct the situation in which Uyghurs with Japanese nationality are unable to confirm the safety of their families in their hometowns or to be reunited.

- (2) From a humanitarian point of view, for Uyghurs living in Japan with Chinese nationality too, we request that the Japanese government urge the Chinese government to correct the situation in which they are unable to confirm the safety of their families in their hometowns or to be reunited. In addition, if the families or relatives of Uyghurs living in Japan are detained, regardless of whether they are Japanese nationals or not, we request that the Japanese government question the Chinese government as to the reasons for their detention and demand their release.

- (3) We request that the Japanese government urge the Chinese Embassy in Japan to correct the situation in which the Chinese Embassy publicly refuses to renew the passports of Uyghurs living in Japan and forces them to renew their passports in China.

- (4) We request that the Japanese government investigate the fact that Chinese authorities have been forcing Uyghurs living in Japan to conduct espionage and provide information by taking their families hostage, and protest against and take legal punitive action against the Chinese government about it.