



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

SDIR • NUMBER 015 • 2nd SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, March 4, 2014

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Chair

Mr. Scott Reid

Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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• (1305)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC)): Order. We are the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Today is March 4, 2014, and this is our 15th meeting, which is televised.

Today, we are hearing from Rebiya Kadeer, President of the World Uyghur Congress, and Mehmet Tohti, independent researcher and ex-president of the Uyghur Canadian Association.

[English]

We also have with us Alex Neve, the secretary general of Amnesty International Canada, and Kayum Masimov of the Uyghur Canadian Society.

To our witnesses, my apologies for the way in which the House of Commons works. You've come here with testimony that deserves to have a full hearing, and we may have to cut it short. I do apologize for that, but the members of the committee have indicated that we'll try, in the event the bells ring, to extend as long as possible the period for questions and answers.

To the members of the committee, I will have to adjust the amount of time for each question and answer to take into account the fact that time has been cut short. I may have to do that on the fly. I'll try to be as fair as possible.

That being said, we ask our witnesses to begin. Please remember that the more time you take for your presentation, the less time there is for questions and answers.

Mr. Neve will be particularly familiar with that problem, having been here on a number of occasions.

With that said, I ask you to begin your testimony, please.

Mr. Alex Neve (Secretary General, Amnesty International Canada, Amnesty International): Mr. Chair, it's a pleasure to be here again in front of you, and it's certainly very much an honour to be here with someone who is such a revered and respected defender of human rights as Rebiya Kadeer is.

I'm going to make a few comments, but I really want to make sure you have ample time to hear from her.

On January 25, just about a month ago, Ilham Tohti, a professor of economics at Beijing's Minzu University, was taken into police

custody in Beijing. He was then transferred in very short order to the city of Urumqi in western China over 2,000 kilometres away. Urumqi is the capital of China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. To the area's Uyghur people, it is east Turkestan.

Why arrest a professor of economics? Why move him so far out of Beijing? I can assure you it had nothing to do with his teaching style. It certainly had nothing to do with his view of economics.

Professor Ilham Tohti is Uyghur. He is the founder of a website, UyghurOnline, which focuses on Uyghur issues, and that is what attracted the ire of Chinese authorities. The fact that he provides a platform for information to be shared about the Uyghur population in China, be it about culture and language or politics and human rights, is something not to be tolerated.

One month later, he remains in detention incommunicado. He's facing charges of separatism, and Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience.

It's one example among so many. Going back many years, decades in fact now, the Chinese government has ruthlessly pursued laws, policies, and actions of ethnic discrimination, religious repression, and cultural suppression against the Uyghur people in Xinjiang and in other parts of the country.

Last week's annual U.S. Department of State report on human rights refers to the severe official repression of the freedoms of speech, religion, association, and assembly—it's pretty complete—of the ethnic Uyghurs. It all comes at a very fraught time for Professor Tohti, because of course just earlier this week there was a terrible violent attack in Kunming railway station during which armed assailants with knives went on a rampage and killed at least 29 passengers and wounded over 130 others. That is now widely being reported as an attack having been carried out by proponents of Uyghur separatism and independence.

That will not bode well for Uyghur activists and leaders such as Professor Tohti. In the aftermath of that horrifying attack, the long-standing tendency of Chinese authorities to characterize any and all advocacy or concern about the Uyghur people as being tantamount to terrorism will almost certainly increase now in the coming days and weeks.

It also does not bode well for a Canadian citizen of Uighur origin, Huseyin Celil. Huseyin Celil was arrested and imprisoned in China in June 2006, close to eight years ago now. He too has been through an unfair legal process. He has been sentenced to a life prison term on charges of terrorism and splittism.

The Canadian government has tried valiantly to work for his release. The Chinese government refuses to recognize his Canadian citizenship and will not allow Canadian officials to even have consular access. Certainly I hope one of the things you will take on board today as you hear from Rebiya Kadeer is how important it is to call for and press for renewed Canadian action on behalf of Huseyin Celil.

Last, I suppose the big question in front of you today after hearing from Rebiya Kadeer about the situation of the Uighur people in China will be what Canada can do about that. I would put that into the larger question of what Canada can be doing to help more effectively push and promote human rights reform in China.

It's not an easy challenge. China's obviously a powerful and influential country. Amnesty International and many organizations that make up the Canadian Coalition on Human Rights in China have been urging for quite some time now that Canada really does need to adopt a comprehensive, across government, human rights strategy for the Canada-China relationship. We don't have one.

Right now human rights issues are largely the responsibility of hard-working staff within the China division at the Department of Foreign Affairs. There are so many other opportunities and openings and moments of influence that Canada has in dealings that happen through Industry Canada, through Natural Resources, through university exchanges, and through a whole host of ways in which we have dealings with China.

● (1310)

I close by repeating the recommendation that has been made many times now to the government. There is an urgent need for an across government, all governments, comprehensive human rights strategy for the Canada-China relationship. To put it into the context of today's session, that is something which in our view would help ensure that Canada's voice is as strong as it can be in pressing for the rights of the Uighur people to be protected.

Mr. Chair, I do have a slightly longer statement that I had intended to deliver today, but with the aim of saving some time, I'll simply leave the longer statement with you and leave my remarks at that.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Neve.

I'm not sure what the intention was with regard to other individuals who are here as witnesses making opening statements.

Mr. Alex Neve: I believe you are now going to hear from Ms. Kadeer. Mr. Tohti will provide translation for her.

● (1315)

Ms. Rebiya Kadeer (President, World Uyghur Congress) (Interpretation): Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you so much, Mr. Chair, for organizing such a hearing today. Six years ago I was sitting in this chair attending the first testimony held at the human rights subcommittee of the Canadian Parliament. At that time

I raised the issue of human rights violations of Uighurs, religious oppression by China, and some other population transfer policies of the Chinese government to the region.

Since the 64 years of Chinese occupation in that area, the last two years have been an especially horrific time for Uighurs and other minorities facing human rights violations. Today, we are talking about more and more extrajudicial killing by Chinese police, just shooting randomly at demonstrators and civilians without any due process. I know that time is limited; therefore, instead of giving my testimony, I will ask my assistant to read the statement.

Mr. Mehmet Tohti (Independent Researcher, Ex-President, Uyghur Canadian Association, As an Individual): Ladies and gentlemen, I'm very happy to be here, she said. She also wants to highlight the main bullet-point issues, which raise particular concern for exiled Uighurs and their home.

Point one is the arbitrary detentions and extrajudicial killings. The number of convictions of endangering state security, or ESS, charges, according to the Dui Hua Foundation based in California, in the United States, has dramatically increased. In 2013 alone, the Dui Hua Foundation said that the convictions of ESS charges are more than 296 for Uighurs. It is 70% of the total number of convictions in China.

For a comparison, in Tibet, according to the Dui Hua Foundation, there are just 20 cases of ESS charges, endangering state security, reported from the high court, but the Uighur Autonomous Region reported more than 296.

I will give you one example of what ESS charges are. On March 26, 2013, Kerem Mehmet was sentenced to 10 years by the Bayingol Mongolian Autonomous Prefecture intermediate people's court for inciting splittism. Allegations against him included disseminating information about ethnic separatism, religious extremism, etc. Also, he was found guilty of possessing illegal books and mobile storage devices containing reactionary propaganda. These kinds of vague charges cost him 10 years' imprisonment.

According to the Dui Hua Foundation, as I said, the majority of endangerment of state security defendants appear to be Uighurs.

The second point I would like to stress is the enforced disappearance of Uighurs in China.

Freedom House, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and others documented large numbers of cases of Uighurs who have disappeared since July 2007. For instance, Human Rights Watch issued a 44-page report that documented the enforced disappearance of 43 Uighur men and teenage boys who were detained by Chinese security forces in the wake of the July 5 Urumqi massacre.

On December 17, 2010, Freedom House issued a report about the disappearances of 20 Uighurs who were deported from Cambodia to China after secret business deals were concluded between the two countries, resulting in an estimated worth of \$1.2 billion.

Amnesty International issued a report, "Disappearing China's Uighurs", on July 4, 2012. They quoted Wang Mingshan, the chief of the Urumqi public security department. He is reported to have said that he had received more than 300 requests from families for help in locating relatives, most of them disappeared.

Despite daily threats and harassments, more than 40 Uighur families bravely came to the RFA, the Radio Free Asia reporter, and provided detailed information about their disappeared loved ones. We received extremely horrifying information about the families of disappeared members in the southern part of east Turkestan. Government security forces threaten the family members to stop inquiring about missing members of their respective families. In our conservative assessment, the actual number of disappeared Uighurs is much larger, more than 1,000, and it is under-reported.

Point number three is religious persecution. It is well covered by many human rights organizations. I would like to mention a couple of things. The persecution of Uighurs for their religious beliefs has expanded since 9/11. It now applies to those men who grow a beard, a moustache, or wear traditional clothes. For women, it is extended to those who wear head scarfs and veils, and so on. Hospitals, schools, buses, banks and other common service areas have put up signs which deny services to those Uighurs who have the above-mentioned appearances. These punishments and restrictions are surprisingly applied to Uighurs only.

Door-to-door surveillance, compulsory lunch services, and other forms of intimidating controls have been very common during Ramadan months for Uighurs to identify and punish those who have fasted. Now armed security forces randomly storm Uighur houses and search for unpermitted pregnancies, religious books, or other materials.

● (1320)

Just two months ago, on New Year's Eve 2013, four Uighur women in Qira County of Hotan Prefecture were forcefully taken to hospital and had forced abortions of six-to-eight-month-old babies.

Point four is extrajudicial killings by police. I would just like to read the news reports instead of giving my intake.

In the middle of February in Uchturpan County of Aksu region, police killed eight Uighurs, according to a New York Times report.

Radio Free Asia reported on December 18, 2013 that police raided one house and killed 16 people, including six women. Radio Free Asia also reported on November 22, 2013 that authorities said that nine ethnic Uighur youths armed with knives were shot dead in the Siriqbuya—in Chinese, Selibuya—police station in Kashgar.

On August 28, 2013, Radio Free Asia reported more than 22 Uighurs were gunned down by a police helicopter in Karghilik County. Up to 12 Uighurs were shot to death by police during the raid on a Xinjiang munitions centre, Radio Free Asia reported on September 27, 2013. A Uighur fruit seller was shot to death by police in an open bazaar in Urumqi, reported on September 11, 2013. The list goes on and on.

Last year alone more than 36 bloody incidents were reported across east Turkestan, and more than 300 Uighurs were shot to death by police or security forces. In our conservative assessment, the actual number of incidents and victims is far greater than this number. The reason is that most of these reported incidents came to the surface due to foreign media reporting, and it is not difficult to realize that many more incidents might have been unreported as the government strictly controls the news flow.

Amnesty International concluded that Uighurs are the only ethnic group in China facing execution by the government for political and religious reasons. Now it is a well-known fact that Uighurs are the only ethnic group in China who are arbitrarily killed in massive numbers without any questions being asked or without being subjected to any judicial process.

Point five is the case of Canadian Imam Huseyin Celil. In the information we have received, Huseyin Celil's family has no access to visit him in prison, while the Chinese government continues to keep him in solitary confinement. Therefore, we urge the Canadian government to continue to put pressure on the Chinese government to secure his release, or secure family visits, including consular access for Huseyin Celil. The Chinese government just wants the Canadian government to forget this case, but we should refuse to forget the case of Huseyin Celil.

Professor Ilham Tohti was already covered by Mr. Alex Neve.

Another thing I would like to mention is Chinese state-sponsored cyber intimidation and espionage cases. Right after the 2007 Urumqi riots, the Chinese government shut down Internet, wireless, and phone services for almost two years in the region. The mere fact of restricting access to the means of communication constitutes a collective punishment of the population.

It is a public secret that the Chinese state is very active in cyber intimidation and espionage. The persecution of political dissidents does not end in China proper but expands far beyond its physical boundaries. We know that e-mail correspondence of exiled Uighur diaspora leaders is monitored, their websites are hacked, their phones are listened to, and their communications are constantly infected by sophisticated malware. It is safe to assume in this testimony that I can be hacked by a third party in China at any time.

Point eight that Ms. Kadeer wants to make is regarding policies of intimidation and hostage taking. The day she was elected as the leader of the World Uyghur Congress, her two children were taken to jail and continue to serve prison terms in China due to her activism.

She wants to give some recommendations to the Canadian government.

We call on the Canadian government to stand firm in defence of universal human rights and to use the UN and other international platforms as a loud voice for voiceless people.

● (1325)

We call on the esteemed committee members to set up a permanent bipartisan body to focus on China's human rights records and issue an annual comprehensive report, just like the U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China or EU Parliament do.

Also, we recommend that the Canadian government and its executive branch, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, emphasize and stress the importance of protecting the rights of Uighurs, Tibetans, and Mongols in their bilateral relations with the PRC, People's Republic of China, which in fact is in full accordance with the proclaimed Chinese constitution and would ensure the minorities' rights are to be respected.

Also, if possible, set up a friendship group for Uighurs, Mongols, and Tibetans, just to send a signal to the Chinese government to respect the rights of those minorities.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs should follow up closely the case of imprisoned Canadian Huseyin Celil. In the case of Ilham Tohti, we should stress that he is an academic person. He raised the case of the human rights violations with respect to the Uighurs in China. He wants to find a solution within the legal framework of China's constitution. His rights should be protected.

We also recommend that the Canadian government pay particular attention to the growing cases of Chinese state-sponsored campaigns of intimidation directed on exiled citizens in Canada. Take note of the growing cases of cyber espionage.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

May I assume that completes the testimony, or is there additional testimony?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Kayum Masimov (Head, Uyghur Canadian Society): The presentations are finished. I am appearing here as the head of the Uyghur Canadian Society. I am ready to answer any questions you may have, especially those concerning Canada.

[*English*]

The Chair: Colleagues, I see the lights blinking. That means 30 minutes until there's a vote in the House of Commons. They're right next door so we can get there if we stay for 25 minutes and the clerk starts the clock right now, but I need unanimous consent to do that.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Okay.

I want to be clear what's going to happen here. I usually see the clock in a way that lets us go a bit longer. That won't happen this time. I can't. We have four minutes for each question and answer round. We begin with Ms. Grewal, and then we'll go to the NDP and Liberals in the usual order.

Ms. Grewal, please.

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): I would like to begin by thanking our witnesses for being with us today to provide testimony about the human rights situation facing the Uighurs.

Since its rise to power in 1949, the Communist Party of China has instituted a policy of resettlement, which includes migrating Han Chinese to the traditional Uighur region. Could you tell us what the long-term effect of this resettlement policy has been on the Uighur

population? Has there been an increase in human rights violations as a result?

• (1330)

Ms. Rebiya Kadeer (Interpretation): According to the Chinese national territorial autonomous law, the local population who exercise an autonomous region shouldn't be lower than other migrant populations, but in fact now, because of the mass population transfer in recent years, or since 1949, the Uighurs have become the minority and their rights are affected in many fields.

In 1949, the Chinese population was about 2% to 3% in the region. Now it is more than 50%. The main goal of the Chinese government is to achieve the assimilation process of Uighurs by transferring large numbers of the Chinese population to the area.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: The U.S. Department of State's 2012 report on international religious freedom found that religious freedom has declined in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Could you please tell us what religious freedom looks like in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, and what caused the decline in religious freedom?

Ms. Rebiya Kadeer (Interpretation): Especially since 9/11, the Chinese government is linking its crackdown on Uighurs to a crackdown on international terrorism. Usually Uighurs are not that kind of radical person. We don't like that. We are [*Inaudible—Editor*] or this kind of thing.

The Chinese government, to talk about religious oppression, doesn't allow people to fast freely. They don't allow people to pray or exercise their religious freedom freely. They don't allow people to go to the mosque or to fast or to use any kind of religious ceremony in their daily lives. All of these things are restricted.

Anyone who is conducting a normal daily religious practice is regarded by the Chinese government as engaged in illegal religious activity, which is regarded as a punishable crime. Not only that, but the Chinese government uses the mosque as an arena for political propaganda, hanging their Chinese flags in the mosques and educating the Uighur Muslims.

As I said a little earlier, last year alone, 37 bloody incidents took place in the region, most of them house-to-house searches for religious books—the Koran or some other religious books—and searches to see who is sending their kids to religious schools and these kinds of things.

Most of the bloody incidents that resulted in the deaths of nearly 300 people are related to this kind of Chinese policy.

• (1335)

The Chair: I'm afraid that has to conclude this round.

Mr. Marston, you're next.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): *As Salaam Alaikum*, and welcome.

It's sad to say that this committee knows the history all too well of what is happening to the Uighurs. We've had people before the committee for the nine years that I've been here. I carried the message of Huseyin Celil to our Parliament a number of times, questioning. I will commit to you, as a member of the official opposition, to do that again in the very near future.

I want to ask a question of Mr. Neve.

We hear all the stories about the injustice and the confinement of people, obviously political prisoners. What is their survival rate? We hear of sentences of 10 to 20 years. Do we have any evidence as to what the survival rate is?

Mr. Alex Neve: I don't think we have that figure with any kind of statistical precision, but we know there is a very serious risk of dying in custody in China from a combination of the effects of torture. Certainly over the years this has been well documented across all population groups that experience imprisonment and torture in China. These would include Uighurs, Falun Gong practitioners, Tibetans, and so on. The torture is very frequently so severe and the access to medical care afterwards so restricted that there have been significant numbers of individuals who have died in custody because of the torture.

Added to that, there are always concerns about prison conditions and people's health situations. People may have had health problems before they were detained, and those are exacerbated by very poor prison conditions and a lack of access to medical care. Or they may simply develop health conditions because of the poor prison conditions. Certainly sometimes those concerns can become grave enough that people die as a result.

Imprisonment in China is unjust for many reasons, but it can actually have life or death consequences.

Mr. Wayne Marston: Let me ask Ms. Kadeer a question.

There are people in Canada who believe that when Canadian mining companies in particular but other companies as well invest in a country, the end result of that investment is some kind of change in the human rights situation. We know there are Canadian companies that have invested in Uighur territories. We also know that they bring in the Han Chinese to fill the jobs.

Have the Uighurs seen any kind of improvement in their lives as a result of this Canadian investment?

Ms. Rebiya Kadeer (Interpretation): It has a negative effect because of the investment made by Canadian companies. There is no change in daily life, but its effect has been negative because that investment brought more Chinese settlers to the region.

It could be beneficial for Canadian companies to raise the issue with their partners. Then, in terms of employment, it would be beneficial to give certain quotas to the minorities, the local people in the area, and at the same time teach them how they treat people in Canada in terms of work conditions, and others, without any discrimination. But I don't know that any Canadian companies are doing that.

In some cases, Canadian companies are helping Chinese businesses get richer and richer without regard for environmental and other concerns, because more Chinese settlements and more Chinese

population transfers mean more exploitation of natural wealth without regard for the environment or the ecosystem.

I don't know whether the Canadian companies have anything to say on this, because this is official Chinese policy not only in the regions but elsewhere too. They simply don't care about the environment.

• (1340)

Mr. Alex Neve: Could I use 30 seconds on that point?

The Chair: Be diligent about the 30 seconds.

Mr. Alex Neve: Okay. I just want to note to subcommittee members that on December 19, the Chinese government launched what they call their great strategic plan for the Xinjiang district. Central to it was a pledge that the overriding goal is going to be to maintain social stability in the region.

Pretty well all observers recognize that to be code for two things. Number one, it means crushing dissent. Number two, it means fostering as much increased trade and investment in the region as possible. I think it's time to be very live to that issue.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Sweet, please.

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Thank you to the witnesses.

Ms. Kadeer, I'm going to be very quick. Did I hear your testimony right, that you have two children who were imprisoned? Are they still in prison now?

Ms. Rebiya Kadeer (Interpretation): Just recently, one of my sons was released because his term was more than over. My other son was transferred to a notorious prison in Urumqi.

Just recently, my son who is in the Chinese prison was released from intensive care at a hospital because he had been beaten so severely in jail. He was transferred back and is still in that notorious prison.

Mr. David Sweet: My deepest sympathies; you are obviously a leader of a repressed people and are suffering that directly yourself.

I thought the idea of having a friendship group with Mongols, Uighurs, and Tibetans was a good idea. I'm the chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Tibet. There are some similarities between those groups, as well as the Falun Gong and Christians there as well, albeit they all suffer different levels of persecution.

This is what I wanted to ask you. You mentioned numbers that were much more substantial, as far as the killings and disappearances are concerned, than those for the other groups. Why is that?

Ms. Rebiya Kadeer (Interpretation): The first and most important thing is that they transferred a large number of Chinese immigrants to the area. They take over the jobs, and they take the lands and the farmland, everything, from the Uighurs, so there could be some social unrest. In order to prevent that social unrest and silence it, they are taking very extraordinary measures. They are killing and intimidating. They're threatening them, telling them not to do anything that shows resentment of the new Chinese immigrants.

The second important reason is that east Turkestan is the energy hub for the Chinese government. Not only is there plenty of energy, but at the same time there is the energy windfall from central Asia as well. By transferring large numbers of the Chinese population to east Turkestan, Chinese ambition is expanding into central Asia to control central Asia as well as to destabilize them in the future.

Third, sadly, the Chinese government is using this kind of Uighur issue and the Tibetan issue just to change the national agenda and to bolster the nationalistic view of the Chinese. They do it from time to time when they have an internal crisis, a domestic crisis elsewhere in the Chinese provinces. When they are persecuted.... For example, I gave you a number of shooting cases, all of them well reported, but the Chinese don't report them. They don't provide this kind of information to their domestic audience.

• (1345)

Mr. David Sweet: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Casey, you have four minutes.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): How many Uighurs reside in Canada?

Ms. Rebiya Kadeer (Interpretation): There are around 2,000. Since 20 years ago, probably, including this decade, there are 2,000 Uighurs living in various parts of Canada.

Mr. Sean Casey: Are they concentrated in any particular area of Canada?

[Translation]

Mr. Kayum Masimov: If I may, I will tell you about the Uyghur population.

I think Uyghurs constitute the most recent and the least numerous minority in Canada. There are about 2,000 of us, and we are dispersed across Canada, from Halifax to Vancouver. Our people mostly live in Toronto and Montreal.

[English]

Mr. Sean Casey: Ms. Kadeer, in your statement you went through a list of things that you thought the Canadian government could do, including raising the Celil case, speaking up at the UN, and the friendship group, but one of the things I didn't hear was acceptance of refugees. Is that something that is a concern in terms of Uighurs seeking refugee status in Canada? If so, what has been your experience?

Ms. Rebiya Kadeer (Interpretation): We missed some of those points because of the time limit.

It is very difficult to find safe shelter around the world, except in the western countries. Most of the Uighur refugees are sent back to China by the trade dealers and some others. They are extradited to China and persecuted. Actually, I have spoken to this issue from time to time with government officials. I mentioned this in my first visit to Canada. Recently, the horrible experience shows that—especially in Southeast Asia, Thailand and some other places—China is very powerful. They are sending all the refugees back to China and persecuting them. So again, through this committee, I sincerely request that Canada help to relocate those Uighur refugees in these areas.

Also, the Uighur refugees in Canada, we are happy with the Canadian people and the government.

Thank you.

Mr. Sean Casey: I have two questions with regard to the recent attacks that Mr. Neve raised. The media described it as a terrorist attack and I think Mr. Neve referenced that.

What is your reaction to its characterization as a terrorist attack? What are the implications of it? What are the implications of that incident for your people?

Ms. Rebiya Kadeer (Interpretation): The Chinese government is going to use this opportunity to intensify its crackdown on Uighurs.

Many Uighurs did not realize this was a terrorist act, by the way. It is the policy of the Chinese government that created this kind of environment in China without addressing the root cause of the problem. As I give you the list of examples, the Uighur people in China could not find any legal venues to express their anger to the government or just demand that the government address their legal grievances.

As we have seen before, whatever happens in China, it's Chinese policy to just blame the Uighurs all the time. According to Chinese news, within eight minutes there were more than 29 people killed and more than 133 people wounded. They also said that there were 10 people with black suits. Later on they said they killed four and one was arrested. If the Uighurs were responsible for this attack, it should be more clear.

The Chinese government should provide details of who they were and why they did what they did. I also urge the international community to put pressure on the Chinese government to provide a clear picture of exactly what happened.

• (1350)

The Chair: A number of these have run over, not because the questions weren't good but because the answers were so thorough. This leaves us only enough time for one question from Mr. Schellenberger and one from Mr. Benskin in order to meet our deadline.

Mr. Schellenberger.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): The report from the Library of Parliament indicated that many Uighurs are the victims of forced organ harvesting in Chinese military prisons and hospitals. What information can you share on this? Is there any indication as to where these organs are going?

Ms. Rebiya Kadeer (Interpretation): As I indicated in my brief statement, thousands of people disappear each year in China. We can only assume where these people end up and that for most of them, their organs are exported or imported. There are illegal gangs in China that sell these organs. They have a very close relationship with the Chinese police state. It's the same thing with drug trafficking

We don't know exactly, but we have a strong doubt, a strong prediction, that the organs of those disappeared Uighurs and some other people are being sold on the black market.

The current information we have received regarding detentions as of July 5, 2009, 140 Uighurs were being transferred to different places. We still don't know where they are.

There is the daughter of one teacher, 19 years old, who was wounded in the leg. Most of them were transferred to a military hospital and all of them disappeared. We can assume that those people are being sold along with organs. For more than five or six years, we don't know the whereabouts of those people.

The Chair: Mr. Benskin.

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Thank you all for being here.

I have a brief question for either of you.

Much of the focus has been on state and Uighur relationships. Very often when you have these types of relationships, state and an ethnic group, there tends to be a different relationship sometimes between the people on the ground. What is the relationship between the Uighur population and the Chinese people themselves, not the government, but the Chinese people, your Chinese neighbours? Is it as hostile as it is with the government?

Mr. Mehmet Tohti: Ms. Kadeer has given me permission to answer your question.

There are two kinds of Chinese immigrant population there. One type is the early comers of the 1950s. Because they have been living in the area for a long time, they understand the Uighur culture and they are very sympathetic to Uighurs. They don't like the newcomer Chinese settlements.

Now the interests of the local people, including the early Chinese settlers, are threatened by the large number of Chinese immigrants to the area, and they are coming with incentives. The government gives them free housing and a tax exemption for 10 years and they can now grab land. It is theirs, and the government pays nearly 200,000 renminbi, or \$40,000 U.S., just for settling in the area.

There is a huge conflict of interest between newcomers and the early settlers and also the local people. Also, there are limited water resources in the area, so the early settlers are sympathetic to Uighurs, and the newcomers try their best by getting the government support to grab as much as they can.

● (1355)

Ms. Rebiya Kadeer (Interpretation): Initially the contradiction was the Chinese state and the Uighur people. Now because it is just a conflict of interest between the newcomers and the Uighurs and others, now that everything is at stake, people don't like each other that much.

Mr. Tyrone Benskin: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Benskin.

Thank you to our witnesses and to the colleagues who remained here to allow us to finish the meeting.

Because of the very tight time limit—we have gone past by about 26 minutes and 30 seconds—we all have to run, so I'm going to have to end the meeting more abruptly than I would like under the circumstances. That is not by way of dissuading you from thinking that we take your testimony very seriously. We're very grateful you came to tell us about what really is a very important human rights matter. Thank you from all members of the committee from all parties.

The meeting is adjourned.

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