

ADEL NOORI*

CHINESE UYGHUR GUANTÁNAMO REFUGEE IN NEED OF PROTECTION



Adel Noori is a Chinese Uyghur, a Muslim minority from East Turkestan, the Uyghur homeland in far western China. Adel Noori had been well-connected to the literary and progressive political movements in East Turkestan, his friends suffered arrest and imprisonment in China because of their intellectual pursuits, and Adel is wanted in China for “political crimes” because of his involvement in a political demonstration. He was living in a house in Kabul when forced to flee the war only to fall into the arms of bounty-hunters.

Summary

Adel Noori is an ethnic Uyghur who has been cleared for release from Guantánamo. He is approximately thirty-five to forty years old, and has a wife and young daughter currently living in western China in the region in which the Uyghurs face sustained, severe and well-documented repression. After taking refuge in a Uyghur village in Afghanistan, alongside other Uyghurs who had left the religious and political repression of the Uyghur population in China, he and the other Uyghurs with him were forced to flee the U.S. bombing campaign. This led to his subsequent arrest in Pakistan, where he and others were sold by Pakistani bounty-hunters to the United States for approximately \$7,000.

In Guantánamo, Adel's efforts to prevent his fellow prisoners from sinking into despair have earned him the nickname “Hope.” Yet, after more than six years of indefinite imprisonment, the many broken promises of freedom that he has received from personnel at Guantánamo, and daily humiliation and abuse, Adel is starting to believe that he will never be released.

Personal History

Adel is a college graduate, and before his imprisonment in Guantánamo he was well-connected to the literary and progressive political movements in East Turkestan, the Uyghur homeland located in far western China. In 1990, Adel's friend Abdulhamid was killed in the uprising known as the Baren War. Adel is a close friend of Husein Celil, the Canadian citizen who was extradited to and imprisoned in China in 2006. He is also a close friend of Abdrahim Otkur, the famous Uyghur author who was arrested and imprisoned by the Chinese government during the Cultural Revolution. Through Otkur, Adel got to know Dr. David Alim, an American professor of physics at Xinjiang University who speaks Uyghur.

Adel was imprisoned by the Chinese prior to his flight to Afghanistan, and is presently wanted by the Chinese for “political crimes” based on his participation in a political demonstration in Ghulja, China in the 1990s.

To escape persecution, Adel fled China and eventually settled in a Uyghur community in Afghanistan where he lived peacefully until he was forced to flee the U.S. bombardment in Afghanistan. When the U.S. commenced military operations in Afghanistan and began bombing Kabul, Adel and the group of Uyghurs with whom he was living ran in all directions in search of safety. Adel escaped to Pakistan, and what he hoped

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would be safety. Instead, Adel was sold for bounty as the U.S. was leafleting Pakistan and Afghanistan with bounty flyers promising significant financial remuneration for the handover of individuals. Adel was transferred to Guantánamo and, despite being long ago cleared for release, he remains there today after more than six years in indefinite imprisonment.

Allegations

The U.S. Government has indicated that Adel was designated an “enemy combatant” by a Combatant Status Review Tribunal (“CSRT”). The transcript of those proceedings, released by the government as a result of FOIA litigation, is only two pages long. The transcript indicates that Adel’s enemy combatant status was ostensibly predicated on allegations that he is a member of the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (“ETIM”), and that ETIM receives support from al Qaeda. This is the same allegation that the U.S. government has leveled against each of the Uyghurs in Guantánamo. However, there is no evidence supporting the claim that Adel is a member of ETIM or has any connection to al Qaeda, the Taliban, or any other group that is or has been engaged in hostilities with the United States. There is good reason to believe Adel was subjected to multiple CSRTs, after the initial CSRT panels determined he was not an enemy combatant. Indeed, there is nothing to materially distinguish Adel from the five Uyghurs who were deemed non-enemy combatants and released to Albania in 2006.

Fear of Torture or Persecution in China

Like all of the Uyghurs held at Guantánamo, Adel would be imprisoned, tortured, and potentially executed if returned to China, or to a country subject to Chinese control or influence. Chinese persecution of the Uyghurs is well-documented. Human Rights Watch has reported that China has “opportunistically used the post-September 11 environment to make the outrageous claim that [Uyghur] individuals disseminating peaceful religious and cultural messages in Xinjiang are terrorists.” Foreign governments have consistently recognized the Chinese government’s use of torture against detainees in their custody, and the unexplained deaths of significant numbers of detainees in Chinese custody.

The recent imprisonment of Uyghur activists Husein Celil and Ablidik Abdureyim, as well as China’s denunciation of President Bush’s June 2007 meeting with World Uyghur Congress president Rebiya Kadeer, confirm that Chinese persecution of the Uyghurs continues unabated.

The Chinese have made it clear, through the interrogation of the Uyghur prisoners in Guantánamo and the pressure they have brought to bear on governments contemplating asylum for the Uyghurs, that they will imprison, torture and likely execute the Uyghurs should they be returned to China. At Guantánamo, U.S. interrogators threatened Adel with return to China, after he refused to spy on his fellow prisoners.

Urgent Need for Humanitarian Protection

Adel would welcome release to any country in which he can be safe and restart his life, without fear of repatriation to China. The Uyghurs imprisoned in Guantánamo were told that they were eligible for release as early as 2003. However, seventeen remain solely because of the lack of a safe country to which they can be released.

Adel is a very intelligent and resilient man, who is nonetheless growing desperate as he enters his seventh year of indefinite imprisonment.