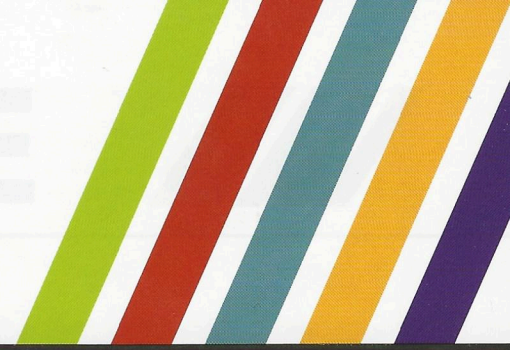


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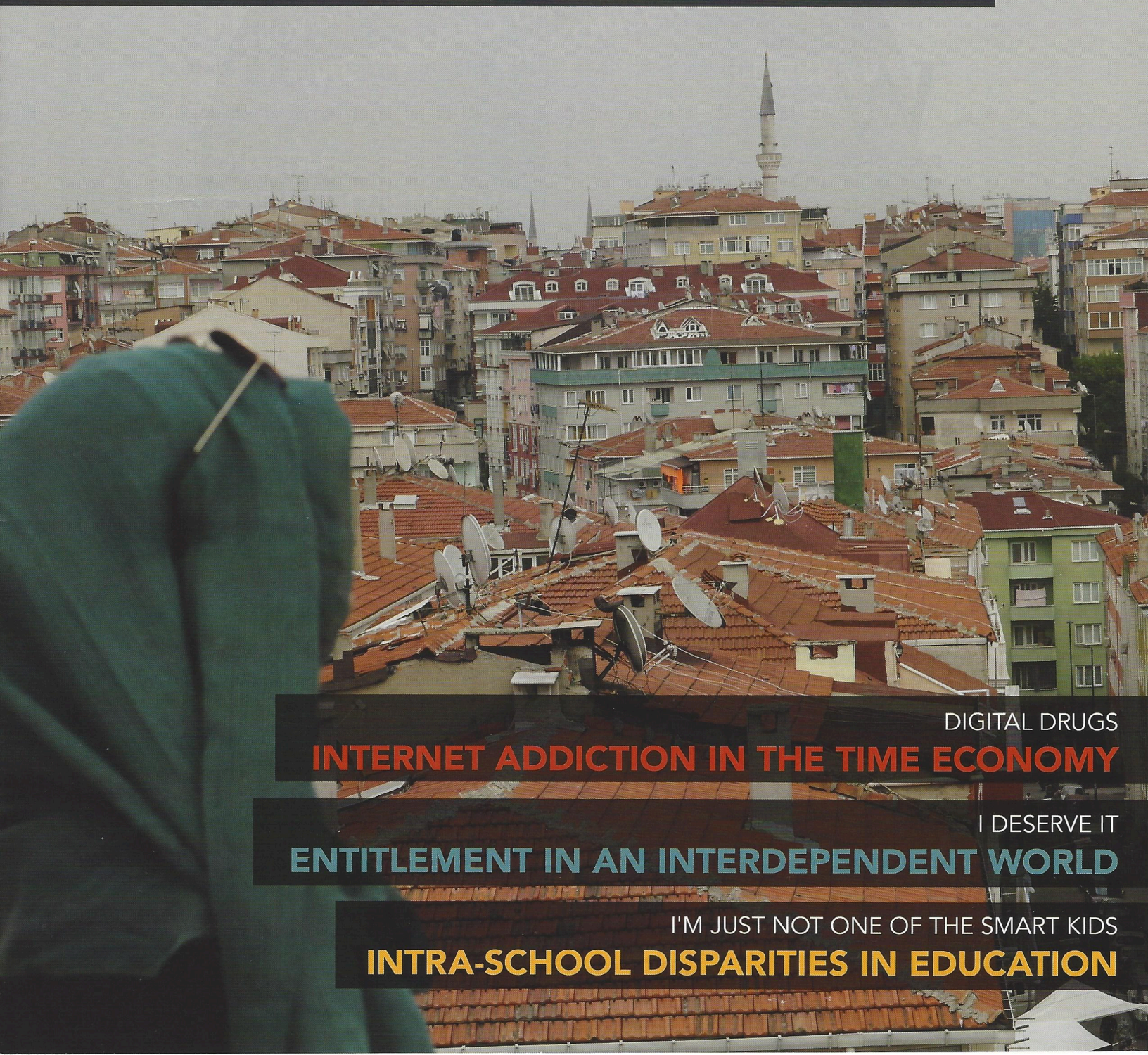


TEAM KENAN'S ETHICS MAGAZINE

SPRING 2018

PROVIDING A VOICE FOR THE SILENCED

VICTIMS OF MODERN DAY ETHNIC CLEANSING



DIGITAL DRUGS

INTERNET ADDICTION IN THE TIME ECONOMY

I DESERVE IT

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I'M JUST NOT ONE OF THE SMART KIDS

INTRA-SCHOOL DISPARITIES IN EDUCATION

PROVIDING A VOICE FOR THE SILENCED

Uyghur Muslims: Victims of Modern Day Ethnic Cleansing

Content Warning: This article contains descriptions of genocide, rape, and torture

Aydin Anwar, Trinity '19

It has always been a long process explaining to people where I am ethnically from. It is not enough to say “East Turkestan” because most people look at me blankly or simply pretend to know what I am talking about. My family is Uyghur Turk and hails from East Turkestan, a nation that has been under Communist Chinese occupation since 1949 and is also known as ‘China’s Other Tibet’. It is known by China as the Xinjiang province, which means “new territory” in Chinese and is located in the northwest part of China.

Playing crucial roles in establishing kingdoms and empires, the Uyghurs lived independently for centuries until they were invaded by the Manchu Qing Dynasty in 1759. Uyghurs rebelled against Qing rule, and in 1863 they were able to break free and establish Kashgaria, or East Turkestan. Two decades later, the Uyghurs were invaded by the Qing again, and this time the Uyghur homeland was formally incorporated under the Chinese empire as ‘Xinjiang’.

Chinese nationalists overthrew the Manchu Qing Dynasty in 1911, putting East Turkestan under the rule of Nationalist China. The Uyghurs carried out numerous rebellions and were able to establish the East Turkestan Islamic Republic in 1933 and 1944, both of which lasted briefly before the

“ MY FAMILY IS UYGHUR TURK AND HAILS FROM EAST TURKESTAN, A NATION THAT HAS BEEN UNDER COMMUNIST CHINESE OCCUPATION SINCE 1949 AND IS ALSO KNOWN AS ‘CHINA’S OTHER TIBET’. ”

Chinese government took back control through the military intervention and political interest of the Soviet Union. The most recent occupation took place in 1949 when the Communist Party of China came to power, and since then, millions of Uyghur Muslims have been subject to systematic ethnic and

cultural genocide.

Islam has been the predominant religion among Uyghurs in East Turkestan, and much of the Islamicization of Central Asia and the Turkic world has been credited to the Karakhanids, who were made up of Turkic tribes living in the Uyghur homeland and converted to Islam in the 10th century. Islamic institutions shaped the sciences, arts, music, and literature of East Turkestan and led to the emergence of hundreds of prominent Uyghur scholars who shaped the course of Uyghur history through their works, like Mahmud Kashgari’s *Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk*, the first comprehensive dictionary of Turkic languages. Kashgar, the capital of the Karakhanid Empire and a major point in the Silk Road, became a prominent learning center of Islam and a hub showcasing the rich Uyghur past.

Today, there are over 20 million Uyghurs in East Turkestan, making them the second largest ethnic group in Central Asia. According to some Uyghur activists, the population is

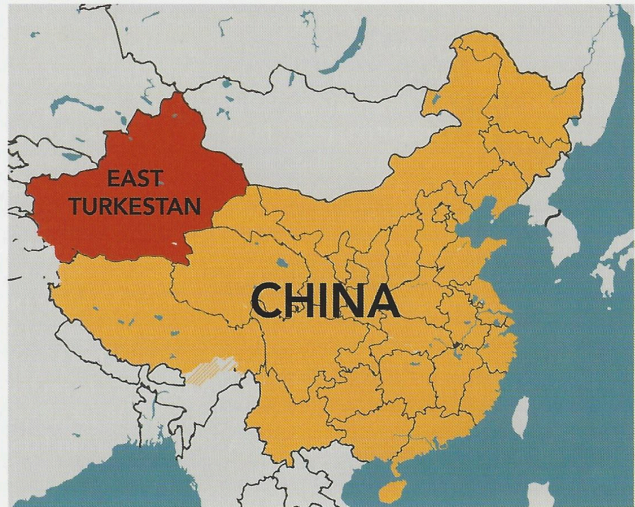
Pictured above: Here, I am overlooking a neighborhood in Istanbul, which has now become home to thousands of Uyghur Turks who have fled China. According to former Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Aric, there were approximately 300,000 Uyghurs living in Turkey as of 2010.

around 35 million – a number hotly contested by the Chinese state, which claims the Uyghur population to be around 12 million.¹

Since the occupation, China has made increasing efforts to maintain possession of the spacious, mineral-rich land as well as its natural resources. Currently, approximately 1/3 of China's wealth comes from the East Turkestan region.² Between 1964 to 1996, nearly one million Uyghurs were killed by at least 46 nuclear explosions carried out by the Chinese government, with many still living under cancerous diseases that resulted from the radiation. Uyghur schools have been shut down, traditional homes and buildings have been demolished, and violence has permeated the region for decades. The Chinese State has also continued to implement subtle and gradual policies to hinder anything that may encourage a defined and dignified Uyghur identity. This has included policies to discriminate and oppress on the basis of religion and culture. For example, Islamic texts and using the Uyghur language in schools are banned, government workers and students are forbidden to fast during the holy month of Ramadan, and women are forbidden to wear the Islamic head veil. According to some

Uyghur refugees I spoke with, even saying the Muslim greeting Assalamu Alaykum results in ten years of imprisonment. Saying Insha'Allah or Hidayim Buyrisa, meaning God-willing, is prohibited and the term for God must be replaced with "Party" (referring to the Communist Party) or the name of the Chinese president, Xi Jinping.

Starting in April 2017, hundreds of thousands of Uyghurs have been sent to overcrowded reeducation camps where Chinese authorities attempt to "undo their religious and



Xi Map of East Turkestan

STARTING IN APRIL 2017, HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF UYGHURS HAVE BEEN SENT TO OVERCROWDED REEDUCATION CAMPS WHERE CHINESE AUTHORITIES ATTEMPT TO "UNDO THEIR RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES" AND INDOCTRINATE THEM INTO ATHEISM.

political ideologies" and indoctrinate them into atheism.³ The conditions of these camps have been compared to those of Nazi concentration camps, leading numerous Uyghurs to die or

be left without medical treatment - the facilities have been reported to be so overcrowded that people must sleep on their sides with adjacent bodies touching each other, and they are not given proper clothing and undergarments even during freezing night temperatures.⁴ Children of those detained in the camps have been sent to overcrowded orphanages in mainland China, where "they have been locked up like farm animals in a shed."⁵

People who have visited or lived in East Turkestan in the past year have described it as a modern-day Orwellian society, where the Chinese government serves as the Big Brother that is watching over all of East Turkestan.⁶ The Chinese government has employed mandatory tracking devices to monitor the actions of the Uyghurs, and has now forced Han government cadres to live in Uyghur homes to make sure they are not engaging in Islamic practices. There are security checkpoints on nearly every block, and entering most buildings requires one to go through facial scannings and ID checks. Starting in December 2017, Chinese authorities in East Turkestan have forcibly collected DNA samples, fingerprints, and iris scans from all residents between the



July 2016 – A gathering of Uyghurs in front of the Chinese embassy in Istanbul to protest the Chinese crackdown on the Uyghurs.

ages of 12 and 65 under the guise of public health programs.⁷

China has also been forcibly assimilating and diluting the population by incentivizing Han Chinese to move into the East Turkestan region and by promoting intermarriage with Uyghurs. Ethnic Han now make up around 40% of the East Turkestan population.⁸ The Chinese government has set up policies promoting “ethnic unity” between Uyghurs and Han, forcing them to engage in three-legged races and having them take part in “relative week”, whereby Han citizens live in the home of an “Uyghur relative” for 7 days and have conversations with the Uyghur families praising the Chinese Communist Party.⁹

China has used 9/11 and the

subsequent global War on Terror to justify its policies against the Uyghur Muslims and attempt to get rid of Islam amongst Uyghurs altogether. In contrast to its acceptance of ethnic Chinese Muslims, also known as the Hui, the Chinese government knows that religion is a deeply embedded part of Uyghur identity and a great source of dignity, strength, and unity for the Uyghur people. By suppressing their practice of faith, China hopes to weaken the Uyghurs and hinder their attempts to reclaim East Turkestan.

In light of this oppression, East Turkestan and the Uyghur people have received very limited international attention. Journalists who manage to enter the region are often unable to document the stories of the Uyghurs. In a recent documentary entitled

“China's Ruthless Crackdown On Its Muslim Population,” an Australian film producer documents his struggle of trying to obtain information on the region.¹⁰ Throughout the film, he shows himself and his team being stalked and prevented by men hired by the Chinese government to document the narratives of the Uyghurs.

Because documenting the stories of the Uyghurs in the region is forbidden and would endanger both interviewees and the interviewers (whether or not they are outsiders), I went to Turkey in the summer of 2016 to interview some of the Uyghur diaspora population and hear their stories.

Here are snippets from two of my interviews:



“**THE WORLD IS AWARE OF THE OPPRESSION IN SYRIA AND PALESTINE, BUT WHAT ABOUT US? WHY HAVE WE BEEN FORGOTTEN?**”

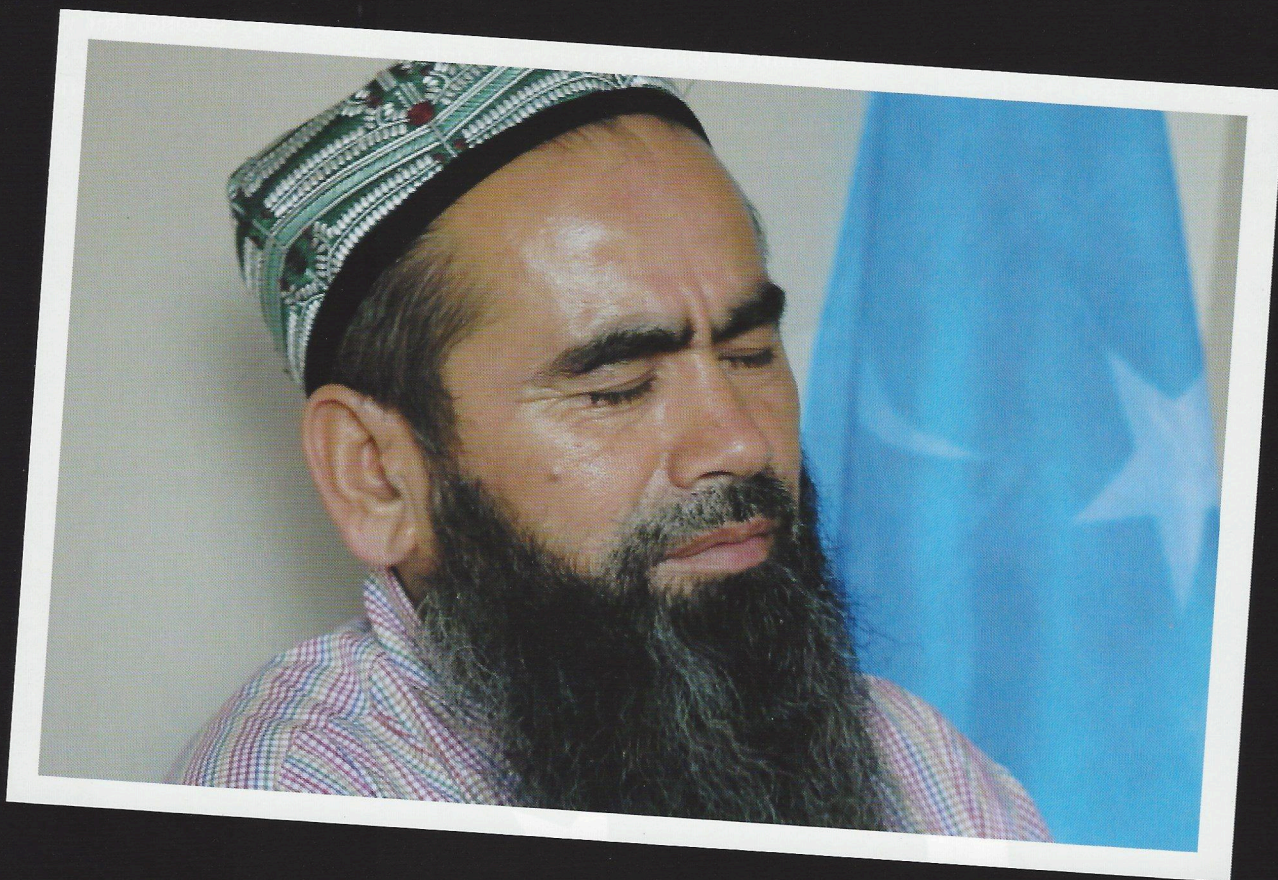
“My oldest daughter got sentenced to nine years of prison for wearing the hijab (Islamic headveil) and a long dress on the streets - three years for the hijab, and six years for the long dress. She was 19. She has been in those cells for two years now, and I have not been able to contact her since. They say that thousands of the teenage Uyghur girls are sent to hospitals every 3-4 months to get abortions because they are being raped in the prisons.

I want to show my face on camera, but I can't. Just showing our faces and speaking the truth would cause millions of our relatives back home to be locked up. What kind of misery is this?

The world is aware of the oppression in Syria and Palestine, but what about us? Why have we been forgotten?”

-Gulmire, mother of six

“ IN ORDER TO GET RID OF THE UYGHUR POPULATION, EVERYTHING THEY CAN'T DO OUTSIDE, THE BLOODY MASSACRES, THEY DO IN THE PRISONS. ”



I also spoke to a man named Adil, a former prisoner who spent a total of 18 years in Chinese prison. His first sentence was for 4 months for writing a poem demeaning communism. The second sentence was for 4 years for trying to escape China. The third time was for 13 years for setting up an “East Turkestan Allah Political Party.”

“Prison life [pause]— now this, no matter how specific I get, it won’t be enough because this is a long process. Here, the Chinese, if there’s a prison, they hide everything from the public;

everything is a secret. In order to get rid of the Uyghur population, everything they can’t do outside, the bloody massacres, they do in the prisons. If I explain my experiences, my tongue would probably be weak. If I speak about my personal experience it will be a very tragic story.”

Crackdown on religion: “Practicing Islam is not allowed. One time I apparently said “Bismillah” out loud in my sleep... they woke me up by dragging me out of bed, to the prison office, where I got beaten until I passed out. They asked me what I said in

my sleep. I said I didn’t know what I said and that I was probably just blabbering. They put a 25 kg cement block attached to a thin wire around my neck and I had to wear it for one month. The block read, ‘This belongs to the one who refuses to bow down to Chinese rule.’”

Lack of hygiene: “We were only allowed to use the bathroom every 12 hours. Many of us often had diarrhea and would not be able to wait to use the bathroom – so many of us ended up defecating in our pants. They would not give us anything to clean

ourselves... for the first nine months we were unable to shower. We had to eat steamed dough with our dirty, feces-ridden hands."

Lack of medical attention: "There was one man, Abdulrahman Qadir, from Hotan, whose hands and feet got infected from getting beaten. Since his feet and hands were infected, instead of amputating them, they let the infection go up his body, up to his waist. His feet looked like the shell of a corn plant. Dried up, there was no meat on his lower body. His bones were crumbled. A bunch of insects covered his whole waist and lower body. He died in the prison."

Forced assimilation: "They say we are not allowed to use the Uyghur language in the prison. So they make us memorize Chinese poems. If we can't memorize them [the Chinese texts], they open the lid of the tub where 20 people had used the bathroom with, and we have to bend down and immerse ourselves in it. Since there

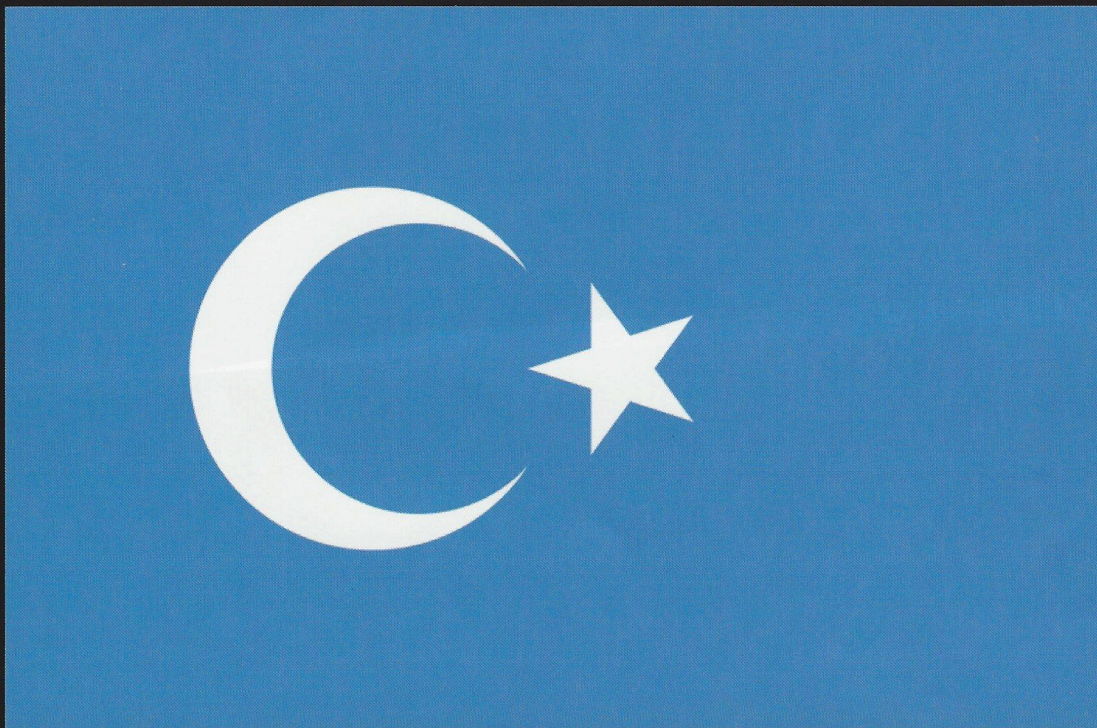
were several times where I didn't bend my head down, they would grab my feet and flip my whole body inside. Once I come out, my ears, eyes, and nose would be filled with poop. If I shake my head, the poop splatters everywhere. They didn't let me use my hands to wipe it off. My eyes are shut closed. Normally, our mouths would be filled with everything. I would think to myself, "Nothing happens to the humans when we eat our own waste"

-Adil

I went on to ask about how he escaped to Turkey but Adil seemed a bit hesitant to tell his experiences right away. He said he was a bit tired and insisted that he come another day to speak about it. Adil wasn't the only one reluctant to talk about how he escaped. Several refugees who I had interviewed beforehand only spoke briefly about their experiences. They said that disclosing details would

endanger those who are currently traveling on the same path.

What we know about the oppression of the Uyghur population at the hand of the Chinese State is just the tip of the iceberg. As Adil stressed to me, there is so much hidden behind Chinese borders and its torture-ridden prisons. Until the international community finds out what is hidden, it must make an effort to gain general knowledge and spread awareness about China's occupation of East Turkestan. It must then pressure governments to demand China's ending of such atrocities. There is another holocaust happening at this very second, but will we have the courage and care to step up and put an end to these injustices before it is too late?



The flag of East Turkestan