

## June 2, 2006: China: USCIRF deplors detention of Rebiya Kadeer family members

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 2, 2006

Contact:

Anne Johnson, Communications Director, (202) 523-3240, ext. 27 WASHINGTON - The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) is deeply concerned about the recent detention, in violation of international statutes, of family members of Rebiya Kadeer, a Uighur Muslim dissident and human rights activist who was exiled to the United States after her release from prison in March 2005. "The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom abhors such intimidation and impermissible violence on the part of authorities in Urumqi, which appears to be designed to harass Rebiya Kadeer's family, and to prevent them from offering credible information about human rights and religious freedom to a visiting Congressional delegation," said Michael Cromartie, Chair of USCIRF. "The U.S. Government should continue to call for the release of Ms. Kadeer's children and press for independent verification of their whereabouts and conditions of detention." "On May 30, police in Urumqi reportedly summoned three adult children of Rebiya Kadeer, including two of her sons and one daughter to interrogate them and warn them that they should not attempt to contact a U.S. Congressional delegation set to arrive in Urumqi. Subsequently, police reportedly took Rebiya's two sons into custody and beat them, resulting in hospitalization of her eldest son. Rebiya Kadeer's daughter and four of her grandchildren, ranging in age from four to fifteen, remain under detention at an undisclosed location. Chinese officials claim that the sons were arrested on charges of tax evasion. Rebiya Kadeer was imprisoned in 1999 because she had expressed criticism of the Chinese government's oppressive policies towards the Uighur people. The U.S. government and the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom had long advocated for her release, which came on the eve of a high level visit of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to Beijing. Upon her release, Chinese authorities warned Ms. Kadeer against becoming involved in efforts for international activism on her peoples' behalf. "Rebiya Kadeer is a courageous woman who has spent years in prison for the sake of promoting greater religious freedom and other human rights for the Uighur people," said Michael Cromartie. "The Chinese government must be held accountable to uphold the principles of rule of law and to respect the human rights of all its citizens, including the rights of Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang," said Cromartie. "Only through implementation of universal human rights norms will the Beijing government gain the international stature that it desires."

Michael Cromartie, Chair

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