

**UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON
INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

REPORTER'S ROUNDTABLE

MODERATOR:
LEONARD LEO,
CHAIRMAN,
USCIRF

SPEAKERS:
USCIRF COMMISSIONERS

REBIYA KADEER,
UIGHUR MUSLIM ACTIVIST

TRANSLATOR:
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GENERAL SECRETARY,
UIGHUR AMERICAN ASSOCIATION

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LEONARD LEO: Well, good morning, everyone. Thank you very much for coming to our meeting today, our press roundtable today. My name is Leonard Leo and I serve as chairman of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. We're joined this morning by a number of our commissioners. I know a couple of others will be arriving in the midst of our event. But maybe if the commissioners could introduce themselves. Felice?

FELICE GAER: I'm Felice Gaer. I'm the former chair of the commission.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Michael Cromartie, vice chair of the commission.

DON ARGUE: Don Argue, commissioner.

RICHARD LAND: Richard Land, former vice chair.

MR. LEO: As most of you probably know, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom is an independent agency of the federal government, a bipartisan agency. And the purpose of it is basically to help to ensure that issues of international religious freedom become a more integral part of our country's foreign policy and national security agendas. We do that by making very specific policy recommendations to the president and the secretary of State and Congress.

And, as a number of you know, the centerpiece of our work is a report that issues on May 1st of every year, where we make very specific policy recommendations regarding around 27 or so countries. And it's also the time when we recommend that certain countries be designated by the administration as countries of particular concern. And, as you all know, China is one of those countries.

The commission has been gravely concerned over the years about the Chinese government's practices of religious repression. And over the past week or so, we've been especially concerned about the government's repression of the peaceful religious practices of the Uighurs – the protests like those that happened last week happened for a reason.

China has put religious minorities' and human rights defenders' backs to the wall. And that causes the kind of resentment, disagreement and instability that results in what we're seeing right now in the Xanjiang province.

The U.S. and international community must speak out strongly about this repression. And it needs to happen quickly because, as we will hear from Ms. Kadeer, the violence and deaths continue. Restrictions on the religious freedom of the Uighurs has been undertaken in the name of security and national unity. But what it is in fact causing is tremendous amount of resentment, disagreement, instability. And it's a matter of significant concern.

We have a statement that, I think, all of you will receive a copy of, or have received a copy of, which lays out a number of recommendations that we think the administration should undertake in responding to the crisis in China presently.

Those recommendations include seeking an independent investigation of the violence that occurred. And then also asking the president to undertake new action against China under the International Religious Freedom Act, perhaps in the form of sanctions or travel restrictions or other methods that are set forth in the International Religious Freedom Act.

And now what I'd like to do is turn our session over to Ms. Rebiya Kadeer, who really doesn't need much of an introduction. I'm sure you all know who she is and have been following what she has been saying in the midst of the events in the Xinjiang province.

She is a preeminent human rights activist and defender. She has shown tremendous courage and moral character, both in the midst of this crisis, but over the years, in many other contexts.

As some of you know, Ms. Kadeer spent – I think it was – six years in a Chinese prison. And our thoughts are also with you because of the fact that your two sons, we understand, remain in incarceration as well, and are not in particularly good health.

And so you have paid a high price for defending human rights and freedom of religion on behalf of the Uighurs. And we are privileged to have you here with us today to offer some remarks on what is going on. And then we will open it up for a conversation with all of you. Ms. Kadeer?

(Note: Ms. Kadeer's comments are delivered via translator.)

REBIYA KADEER: First of all, I would like to thank the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom for holding this very important press conference with the concern of the Uighur peoples' religious freedom – at this time, under repression. I'd also like to thank all the reporters who are here at this very special press conference.

I would like to begin with the name of what we call East Turkestan. The Uighur people have always called our country as East Turkestan. And after we were forcefully annexed by the Chinese authorities in 1949, we became part of PRC – what many Uighurs consider as an occupation. After 60 years of the Chinese government's repression, the Chinese policies have been backfiring.

As a result, we see a lot of resentment among Uighurs. And what you have witnessed on July the 5th is one of them. On July the 5th, the Uighur young people took to the streets, initially peacefully, to protest against the mob beating and killing out the Uighurs in Guangdong province.

And, as in the cases in the past, the Chinese government always uses force to deal with any kind of Uighur peoples' peaceful protests and legitimate demands. The same thing

happened in 1997 when the Chinese security forces massacred the peaceful Uighur protestors in the city of Gulja. And this time, we are witnessing the same.

And when those Uighurs took to the streets to protest, they actually held up China's national flags. And initially, the Chinese security forces just provoked them for a couple of hours. They waited until it became dark to take action against them. And after, the Chinese security forces began to beat the Uighurs, provoke them with dogs, and other things, more and more Uighurs began to protest against the Chinese security force's brutality.

And after that, what we learned is after it became dark, the Chinese authorities turned off the lights of the area where the Uighurs were protesting. They also suspended all the wireless communications so that nobody could talk, text message or take pictures.

And then the Chinese security forces – we were told – they fired upon the Uighur crowds in the dark, killing hundreds. But the Chinese government later came up with a statistic that said 184 killed altogether. A majority of them are the Chinese, and only 40-something are the Uighurs. But according to the phone calls of some of the people who called asking us for information – and some of the Chinese Web sites' claims – actually the real number of people killed and wounded are upon thousands. We do not know the exact number.

So we cannot accept the number given by the Chinese authorities, which is 184. If that number were correct, the Chinese government wouldn't have used all the power in their disposal to control the information, to block out the information, to make sure that only their version of the story broadcasts all over the world.

And also, we can see from the protests by the Uighur women two days after these killings, and they all went up to demand their husbands. They were holding IDs; demanding their husbands. Some of their husbands were taken away by the authorities but some of them are not even aware of what happened to their husbands.

And after that, all mosques were shut down – closed by the Chinese authorities. They prevented the Uighurs from praying last Friday, but still the Uighurs took to the streets; went to mosque to pray.

And in other – it's not just limited to Ürümqi. In Kashgar, Hotan, all the other predominantly Uighur cities, the Chinese authorities went and rounded up all those usual suspects – Uighurs, especially; religious people.

And from the information we gather that the Uighurs who live from – what they call, from South Gate all the way to Xanjiang University. This is a predominantly Uighur area in Ürümqi. A lot of these Uighurs either fled out to other areas, either disappeared – a lot of people do not know what happened to them.

And after that event – after Sunday's event – the Chinese government not only deployed mass security forces and troops from other provinces, using their biased reporting – they basically began to inflame Chinese peoples' anti-Uighur feelings. As a result, Chinese mobs

appear in the streets, especially at night; began to beat and kill many Uighurs. We are not sure how many killed and wounded.

And the Chinese government explained that this was only between two ethnic groups – nothing to do with the Chinese policies on the ground. Some Uighurs may not be happy with the Shaoguan toy factory mob killing and beating of the Uighurs, but Chinese policies are still good in the region. But this is not true because this is actually a result of six decades long of China's repressive policies forcibly imposed upon the Uighur people to destroy Uighur peoples' religious beliefs; Uighur peoples' identity, culture, our language and our way of life.

And the Guangdong incident shows the fundamental failure of the Chinese government's recent policy, which was initiated in 2006. The policy is to forcefully transfer young, unmarried Uighur women to eastern part of Chinese sweatshops to work as cheap labor.

And these Uighurs, they do not want to go to eastern part of China. In fact, they would rather want to work in their own hometowns as locals. But there, because the Chinese government discriminates against them, the government does not provide them any jobs.

Well, all the jobs are received to the Chinese migrants who can come, get the jobs with high pay and housing; everything provided and guaranteed, whereas the Uighurs go to the eastern part of China with low pay, and also, they are not welcome. And we saw what happened when thousands of Chinese mobs, sparked by unfounded stories, went after the Uighurs and killed many of them and injured so many of them.

I would like to end by specifically pointing out the Chinese government's forceful transfer of these young women to eastern part of Chinese sweatshops to work. This is one of the very highly charged, provocative policies because this is against Uighur peoples' traditions, way of life; against Uighur peoples' religious beliefs. Uighur people don't tend to send their young daughters into other parts of provinces they have never heard of to work as cheap labor.

As a result, the situation became extremely explosive in the region because many Uighurs consider the Chinese government's trying to commit a form of cultural genocide; gradually wipe these people, their culture, their everything, out – forcefully assimilate them into the Han Chinese.

And the Chinese government, of course, claimed that everything is under control right now. But only the Uighurs are under control. But the Chinese mobs – we were told they are still, at night, still beating, still killing some of the Uighurs. It seems the Chinese authorities are turning a blind eye, not aggressively prevent the Chinese mob attempts against the Uighurs. And we hope that will stop. Thank you.

MR. LEO: Why don't we open it up for questions and discussion? Yes, sir. If you could identify yourself.

Q: Yeah, I'm Richard Finney with Radio Free Asia. Comparisons are being made to the situation of the Uighur people with the Tibetan people. Could you say what you feel the similarities are? And also, are there any differences between the two cases?

MS. KADEER: The Chinese – the PRC took over both regions one after another – us in 1949, Tibet in 1950. And the Chinese policies and treatment of the Uighurs and Tibetans are very similar. The difference of course is our religion. And Uighurs believe in Islam; Uighurs are Muslims. And as a result, the Chinese government went aggressively against Uighur people's religious faith, labeling Uighurs as terrorists, religious extremists and especially arresting, sentencing and even executing Uighur religious people. A lot of them are Uighur religious students.

Another difference is international response to the tragedies. We saw what took place – the unfortunate events last year in Tibet. We saw tremendous international support and concern. And world leaders all spoke up against China's government's injustice. In our case, the international response is very hesitant, very mild and this is, of course, creating the situation even worse.

MR. LEO: Commissioners, anyone – want to respond to that?

NINA SHEA: Yes –

MR. LEO: Commissioner Shea.

MS. SHEA: Mrs. Kadeer, thank you. Nina Shea. Thank you so much for joining us. The repression of the Uighurs long predated the issue of international terrorism. Can you quickly just describe some of the restrictions on Uighur religion in China?

MS. KADEER: Prior to 9/11 and prior to the global war on terrorism, at least the Uighur people could speak their language at official levels and educational systems. And Uighurs had a little bit better than after 9/11 situation. But after 9/11, the Chinese government saw 9/11 as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to justify the persecution of the Uighur people. And the Chinese authorities had a dramatic change of policy in dealing with the Uighurs.

And after that, of course, they began to impose a number of policies that could not have been able to be justified prior to 9/11 – using terrorism, separatism and religious extremism as an excuse, they impose a lot of policies, which I talked about. One of them is a forceful transfer of the women. But after 9/11, of course, the mosque closures are rampant and the minors, women, students, (cadres ?), none of them are allowed to go to mosques. During the holy month of Ramadan, Uighurs are not allowed to fast. And in the work units, Uighurs are forced to eat and even drink alcohol during Ramadan against their religion and against their conscience.

And when Uighurs now when they teach their children about peaceful religion – gather a couple of kids to teach and the Chinese government arrests them as practicing illegal religious activities and arrest those people who teach. In the worst case scenarios, they sentence and even

execute Uighurs. And so after 9/11, it became so easy for the Chinese government to just label Uighurs as a terrorist religious extremist and execute the Uighurs in huge numbers.

MR. LEO: Commissioner Gaer.

MS. GAER: Thank you very much. Thank you very much Mrs. Kadeer for filling us in not only today but in the past. The scenario you described is really quite shocking – the lights being turned off and Chinese police firing into the crowds. To understand what’s happening there, obviously one needs to have been there or to have somebody who can investigate or document this.

Our commission has been calling on the U.S. government to establish a consulate in Ürümqi. We also had called on the administration to pay more attention to the situation. Would you support that concept? And what other things do you think the administration should do at this point in time?

MS. KADEER: What happened is really extremely disappointing and disheartening. It is – we got this information that the Chinese security forces opened fire. Not a lot of Western media are realizing that gunshots were fired into the crowd, although the Chinese government denied it because a lot of people who were killed and wounded were killed and wounded by gunshots.

And this Sunday’s brutal killing and crackdown on the Uighurs – I compare that like the Tiananmen Massacre that took place 20 years ago. On that day, a Uighur man from Japan who was able to talk to his relative back home passed me a message saying basically the Chinese soldiers – security forces began to shoot into the crowd, killing a lot of people. And they were just extremely shocked. And what the Chinese government has been able to successfully do is to cover up well, control the information on the ground to blame the Uighurs. That’s why it’s extremely hard to find out exactly what happened, how it happened and how many people killed and wounded.

And after these brutal killings, of course the Chinese state media, Chinese government blamed us and blamed the Uighurs as outlaws and (riders ?). And by frequently showing the image of Uighurs beating up the Han Chinese on their national TVs, on their papers, major medias begin to inflame the Chinese people’s anger towards Uighurs. And as I explained earlier, the Chinese mob has now took to streets and killed and injured even more.

And local party Secretary Wang Lequan and also Chinese President Hu Jintao who went back to Beijing – both of them declaring hard-line measures to punish the Uighurs. Yesterday, we all learned that two Uighurs were shot dead by the Chinese security forces. Of course they explained it away in a very nice way but who knows what happened. That was something that was witnessed by the international community and reporters on the ground. We don’t know how many other Uighurs were killed some other place that we are not aware of. And we just got some information that some 70 Uighurs have been arrested in the city of Ruoqiang by the Chinese security – and those 70 were arrested because they went to a mosque to pray.

And we know the situation is extremely bad. And more and more people are disappearing – rounded up, arrested. Some are being killed but it's extremely hard for us to get the information – really good information from on the ground.

I believe that the international community, especially the United States – if it is not heavily involved in this issue and urge the Chinese government to stop the repression but rather keep quiet or turn a blind eye to the Chinese government atrocities out in the open, then the Chinese government will see such indifference as a green light to go ahead with maybe killing more Uighurs and just destroy the Uighurs as a people.

So my hope is that President Obama and Secretary Clinton will raise this issue in the highest level if possible and meet with top-level Chinese officials and urge them to stop what's going on, on the ground, and change their policies. And I really appreciate the proposal to have a consulate in Ürümqi. That would be very good as well to monitor the situation on the ground. And also it's critically important for the international community to send investigative teams to find out what really happened, how many people killed and also to talk to those women who took the streets bravely the other day. And what happened to their husbands? Where are their husbands whether detained, killed.

And one of my last requests is that the Chinese government should release all the Uighurs arrested since last Sunday. The Chinese state media put the number of arrested Uighurs as 1680 people but the actual number of arrests is much, much higher according to some of the phone calls we get from the Uighurs because Uighur males are disappearing in Ürümqi – a lot of Uighur males. And also, the number can come to even up to 5000, some of the Uighurs claim.

And we also want the international community to pressure China to stop the proposed execution of the Uighurs that was declared by the top-level Chinese officials. And I also hope if it's possible that for us represented by the World Uighur Congress to be part of this investigation team to see what took place.

The last thing I would say is the Chinese government should be sincere in addressing the legitimate grievances of the Uighur people. One of the best ways is to start a peaceful negotiation with us to talk, to address. That will help ease the tension and change the situation on the ground. And China should also stop using terrorism as a card to repressing Uighurs.

MR. LEO: Let's take a question from the press and then we'll turn to another commissioner for questions. Other press questions? Yes, please identify yourself.

Q: Sure. Sean Temby (ph) with AFP. I just wanted know – I know you made a statement yesterday regarding threatening to attack Chinese interests in Africa. I wanted to see if you could expand on that but also whether you see this as being somewhat of a turning point if you will that – the Uighur leader in exile is based in the United States. Militant groups are threatening China. Do you sense that because of – even if you say it's a bit mild your support of the United States that perhaps the image of the United States may have changed a little bit in that sense in the eyes of Uighurs? Does this question make sense?

ALIM SEYTOFF: Can you rephrase it, if you don't mind?

Q: Sure, sure. Just whether – I mean, in light of she being based in the United States and al-Qaida – obviously she's distancing herself from the al-Qaida threatening Chinese interests in Africa.

MR. SEYTOFF: Right.

Q: Does this mark somewhat of a turning point in that the U.S. is no longer perceived as the bad guy when it comes to the rights of an Islamic minority?

MS. KADEER: Yeah, my answer is: I'm not exactly sure about why they are claiming the thing or so-called attack supporters. I'm surprised myself. Of course, we don't support whatever they are saying or trying to do. But it's a fact that the United States and the Western world are very interested in the plight of the Uighur Muslims and that they're our big supporter and we are very grateful.

MR. LAND: First of all, if you check our U.S. commission report, you'll discover that there are many places in the world where we have urged our government to stand up for the rights of Muslims who are being persecuted in various places – India being one of them and others. I wanted to ask this question to you, Madame. Thank you so much for being with us. If you could speak directly to the American people now as opposed to the American government, what would you say to them as to how you would wish that we could help you in your cause?

MS. KADEER: And if I could speak directly to the freedom-loving American people, I would ask them to, first, urge the government to voice a stronger concern over our situation.

And my hope is, if I speak to the American people, I hope they could understand that we are just like the Tibetans – suffering under the same authoritarian rule, suffering the same persecution, yearning for the same religious freedom and for human rights. And our hope is that American people could support us any way they can – financially, materially, or just, of course, peacefully supporting our peaceful efforts to struggle for our freedom and a democracy.

American peoples' support of our cause is extremely important for us. And my hope is also that the American people will not be swayed by the Chinese government's successful and massive propaganda campaign launched against us and the Tibetans – demonizing us and the Tibetans.

So I hope is that the American people will learn about our suffering, our situation, then come to a better conclusion so that when American peoples stand up for the rights of the Uighurs and Tibetans, things will eventually change.

One example I would like to point out is the fact that the Uighurs were in Guantanamo. Of course, because of the Guantanamo stigma, and also because of the Chinese government's propaganda, non-stop propaganda, that the Uighurs are terrorists. And in the mind of a lot of American people, they have the misconception that the Uighurs might be prone to terrorism,

there must be some terrorists among Uighurs, and 22 Uighurs who were initially transferred to Guantanamo may even be terrorists.

But at the end of the day, we realized, and the American government and even the people realized the 22 Uighurs are not terrorists. They're innocent people picked up in Pakistan. And so I hope American people learn about our situation, understand us and, I know then, they will support us.

And we can see from the released Uighurs, and even though they were locked up for seven years, and even though they knew they were innocent, and they were told they were not enemy combatants, after they were released, they still didn't criticize the U.S. government. They said it was the Chinese government's oppression that drove them to other places. At the end, landed in Guantanamo, but they thank the U.S. government for not sending them back to China, where, most likely, they'd be executed.

MR. LEO: Another question from the press?

Q: Here we have mentioned several times about the Chinese government. Do you think the Chinese government and the Chinese Communist Party is the same concept? Because nowadays, lots of Chinese, they think the Communist Party cannot represent the Chinese government. It's starting from 1949. The Chinese Communist Party invaded China and took over the control of the Chinese government. So they think the Chinese Communist Party is the cause of all those tragedies.

And so my question is, do you think Chinese government and the Chinese Communist Party is the same concept? And I have another question – it's not only Uighurs who have been killed in China. Not only Uighurs or Tibetan, not only minorities have been killed in China. Chinese Communist Party, they also persecute the Chinese majorities, a lot of Chinese people.

So because the Chinese Communist Party – now they claim that this tragedy is because of the conflicts between Chinese and the Uighurs. But do you think that it's only between Chinese and Uighurs? Just now you mentioned it's because of the policy; the long-time institutional, long-time suppression from the Chinese Communist Party? So my question is, do you think there is a chance for Chinese and Uighurs to unite together to speak out against the Chinese Communist Party? Thank you.

MS. KADEER: To answer your second question, I believe that the Chinese people and the Uighurs and other oppressed groups can all unite together in their peaceful struggle against the Chinese government Chinese Communist Party's brutality. I believe a few people within the Chinese government party are targeting all groups and persecuting all groups. And they should be blamed.

Right now, it seems the Chinese Communist Party runs the Chinese government. So it's the same thing. It's the same entity. For example, in East Turkestan – in our country – we have a Uighur chairman called Nur Bekri and he actually doesn't have any actual power. And he is

controlled by the Chinese party's secretary. So it's a party-controlled government everywhere, especially in our case.

And for different ethnic groups or peoples to live together in peace, their freedom should be given; rights, respected. And for us, the Uighurs forced to go to the eastern part of China to work as cheap labor should be returned to our home country. And also, provide employments to those Uighurs transferred – locally. And for those people who do not like Uighurs, who hate the Uighurs – maybe in our territory – they can feel free to leave; to go back to eastern Chinese provinces.

So the Chinese government should change their policies. And the Chinese government should create the preconditions for a peaceful coexistence within different groups.

MR. LEO: Commissioner Argue?

MR. ARGUE: A couple things. One, I want to pick up on what Dr. Land said about us representing Muslim religious people in various parts of the world. And you may be aware – we have a Muslim imam, Talal Eid, here, who is part of our commission and travels with us to various countries.

The comment about Hu Jintao leaving the G-8 summit is very self-incriminating for the Chinese. Why would he leave a meeting of the major leaders of the world to put down a small, little insurrection? This is a major issue. And the pattern of the Chinese is very clear. Whether it's Tiananmen Square or some other place, they come in with massive force.

The press is being managed and we are very grateful that you are here this morning to give us an insight. I trust the press will pick up on it and communicate it out.

Mr. Chairman Leo, we have four recommendations. Are they going to be distributed to the press? I would be redundant to go into them, but –

MR. LEO: They're set forth in the statement but you should feel free to call attention to it.

MR. ARGUE: Well, we would, as a commission – and the chairman can speak for us – are calling on our government and Congress, the White House, to speak out very strongly in the defense of these people who are being persecuted. And there are a number of ways that our government can do that. And those are detailed in these four principles that are here for you to see.

MR. LEO: All four, of course, are very important. Just speaking personally, I'd call attention to one of them in particular. And that is our call for taking new presidential action under the International Religious Freedom Act. The idea of our president, for example, announcing that he would establish new targeted sanctions on exports or the president could impose new travel restrictions on government officials or other public officials. There are a

number of different actions the president could take under the act that would go further than the administration and the government already has.

MR. ARGUE: Well, and seek an independent investigation, if that would be possible.

MR. LEO: Other questions from the press? Yes, ma'am.

Q: My name is Ashley Zurls (sp). I'm from EDS (ph). You said that – (inaudible) – death toll is like a thousand, as much as 90 percent, into the thousands. Do you believe that to be true of the Han death toll as well as the Uighur death toll, and what are you basing that on? And also, considering that you believe that the Uighur death toll is higher than the Han death toll, despite what's being reported? Do you think that's being tailored as well?

MS. KADEER: I believe the Chinese government – the information given with regard to the death toll and the wounded, the number of Han Chinese is the number that is given. And the government gave that number, of course we believe, to blame the Uighurs, to inflame the Chinese sentiment against the Uighurs and to justify their own actions.

And from the Guangdong toy factory mob beating and the killing, you can see the Chinese government only announced 2 Uighurs killed. A hundred or more were injured. But actually people interviewed the Han Chinese who took part in the mob – took part in the beating and the mob killing that day. You know, if you read the Guardian report, it specifically said that one particular individual – (inaudible) – killing up to six, seven and he was shocked when the Chinese government announced that two Uighurs were killed. He believes at least 30 or more Uighurs were killed that day.

So in that instance, the Chinese government is reducing the number of Uighurs killed and wounded to absolute acceptable level. And with the Uighurs and East Turkestanis, we know for a fact that the Chinese government used massive security forces on a day of protest. Images showing there are at least four kinds of different security forces, fully armed using armed vehicle carriers, attack dogs and of course other local polices. And we know from the phone calls we received that they did turn off the lights of certain sections of the city where the Uighur young people were protesting in order to, you know, have a blackout so that nobody could take picture or video image of everything. And then they shot and killed many of the Uighurs.

And from the Uighurs that day, we get information. Hundreds were massacred right there. And of course we don't have the exact number of the Uighurs, how many killed but from different sources, different people calling us telling us the different area of the Uighurs killed – that is the number of people killed up to a thousand. Of course, we cannot verify it at the moment.

And from the phone calls we got – at least one or two dozen phone calls from the Uighurs – a lot of their accounts confirm what happened, that the security forces indiscriminately shot and killed many Uighurs. And some of the Chinese Web sites seem to indicate – seem to validate – accounts of the Uighurs. And in addition to that, of course the Chinese authorities had done very good management there – PR control basically. Although allow some of the foreign

reporters to come, to report but only to confirm their version of the story, not to allow the foreign reporters to go freely, interview the Uighurs, ask them how many Uighurs killed and wounded. And the only footage the foreign reporters were able to get is from the Uighurs who are protesting on the streets.

MR. LAND: Leonard, I'd like to ask one more question. I'm very disturbed by these reports of forced migration out of Uighurs and bringing Han Chinese in in-migration. Can you give us any numbers of the number of Uighurs who have been forcibly migrated out to eastern China and other parts of China and how many Han Chinese have been brought in?

MS. KADEER: In 2006, one of the Chinese government's official Web sites – they call tianshannet – declared that there were 260,000 instances of transfer of these Uighurs to eastern part of China. And the Chinese government in addition to that, they're recruiting Uighurs from different counties, different prefectures, 500 here in this village, 1,000 or 2,000 in that county – all of them if the numbers could put together, the number could be as high as 370,000.

There are instances that – because initially the government forcibly recruited the young, unmarried women from 16 and up, it seemed that they ran out of young women around the age of 16. They went under and even took young Uighur women from 14 and up. Yes, and that is an out-migration of the Uighurs forcibly taken to eastern part of China. The in-migration of the Han Chinese – yes, it is for the past six decades, you know. They used to be a very small number of population. Now they're almost becoming the majority of the population. The Chinese government claim that they're just a little bit under the Uighur population but that excludes Chinese security forces, migrants, et cetera.

MR. LAND: So it'd be about 8 million.

MR. SEYTOFF: At least 8 million.

MS. KADEER: And every year –

MR. SEYTOFF: Ms. Kadeer says –

MS. KADEER: The Chinese government also brings nearly a million Chinese workforce in the name of picking cotton in our area. But most of them do not go back. Yes, in oil and gas industries, our territory produce so much – all are dominated by Han Chinese. You never see a Uighur. And only Uighurs are mostly farmers there. They farm and they also do cotton. But even cotton-picking – every year they send nearly a million people to pick cotton. So reducing the Uighurs into poverty.

MR. LEO: Commissioner Eid. We have a minute very briefly.

TALAL Y. EID: Thank you for coming. You mentioned that you are hoping for the Chinese government to enter into a peaceful negotiation with the Uighurs. My question is what the Uighurs are hoping to accomplish by entering into a peaceful negotiation with the Chinese?

MS. KADEER: Yes, our hope is as it is clear that the Chinese government has been demonizing us and the Uighurs as three evils is what they call separatists, terrorists and religious extremists by denouncing us. Our hope is by talking to the Chinese government to address our side of the story, our grievance – the legitimate grievances of the Uighur people and the failure of the Chinese policies in the region.

And the Chinese government, of course, confer the Uighur people purport autonomy in 1955, which is now the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. And why the Chinese government did not implement those policies and how the Chinese government used that actually as a framework to justify the persecution of the Uighurs. And we would like to lay out our demands and what we want and of course listen to how that can be achieved through a peaceful negotiation with the Chinese government. And we will tell them why the Uighurs are not happy, why the Uighurs are protesting, why under six decades of Chinese rule, still the Uighurs are not quiet protesting and other groups are protesting as well.

And our hope is let the international community to mediate, to get involved as well to open the book of the Chinese government's policies, to open the book of our grievances, to open the book so that we can all come together to make a peaceful settlement of the issues. Of course the Chinese government have to change their policies, religious controls – strict religious controls – political persecution, economic domination, cultural attack and attack on our identity and as I explained again and again the forcible transfer of Uighur women – all of this should stop. And the Chinese government promised the Uighurs and the Tibetans, others the right of self determination. They took power and we should begin with that as a negotiating point.

Because the Chinese government's propaganda has been is the Uighur people are happy just like other groups. They're united under Chinese rule. It's only they're free, they have religious freedom, they can pray, they can do this and it's only a small number of the hostile elements are disturbing the peace and the unity of nationalities and portraying that people do not have religious freedom. And all of these lies – all of these lies should come out. And they should acknowledge the lies and the international community should know the lies. Then we can rebut the lies and change the policies about such demonization and propaganda.

MR. LEO: Well, we've hit the 9:30 hour so we have to wrap up. But Tom Carter, do we have a space where Ms. Kadeer can remain for a few minutes if members of the press would like to meet with her individually? Okay, so if you'd like to stay a little bit longer and if members of the media would like to have a little time with Ms. Kadeer further, we would be happy to have you here. We've got an empty office just off of this conference room that you can use.

And we want to thank you again for joining us today and we wish you well in your efforts. Thank you all for coming and Tom, if you would escort Ms. Kadeer and then again, if folks would like to spend some time with her, please feel free. And the commissioners, we're going to take a brief break and go right into our meetings in about five to 10 minutes.

(END)