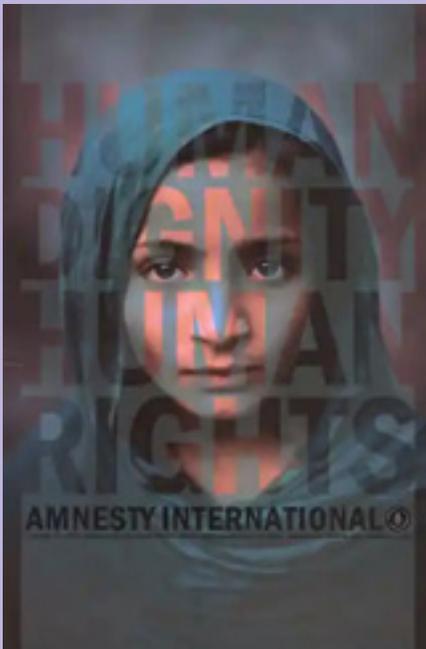




**April 2022**

Our Next Meeting:  
April 14th on Zoom



“Our hopes for a more just, safe, and peaceful world can only be achieved when there is universal respect for the inherent dignity and equal rights of all members of the human family.”

– UN Women Executive Director  
Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka



Ilham Tohti was the focus of a Write for Rights Campaign video in 2016.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bckRfDUaXtw>

### **AI Group 48 Adopts Case of Ilham Tohti**

During the February 2022 Group 48 monthly meeting, the group voted to “adopt” and follow a Uyghur man imprisoned in China, sentenced to life in prison on September 23, 2014. The following is a summary of Ilham Tohti, a prisoner of conscience. You may remember his name as one of the 5 imprisoned individuals featured in Amnesty International's campaign for the Beijing Winter Olympics.

An Economics professor at Minzu University of China, (formally Central University for Nationalities in Beijing), Ilham Tohti is a renowned Uyghur intellectual. He is the founder and director of “Uighur Online”, a bilingual website, and worked for two decades to build understanding between Uyghurs and Han Chinese.

On January 15, 2014, Ilham Tohti was taken from his home in Beijing. He was denied food for 10 days, his feet were shackled for 20 days, and despite UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, he was sentenced to life imprisonment following a brief and unfair trial. His wife received the arrest warrant on February 25 telling her that he was being charged with “separatism”. This is a charge that has often been used against Uyghurs who speak out against human rights violations.

The timing of his imprisonment was around the time of the March 1, 2014 Kunming train station attacks leaving 29 people dead and blamed on Uyghur groups.

Ilham Tohti maintains that he opposes violence and separatism and that he only highlighted concerns about social and political issues as a Uyghur academic.

According to Amnesty International: In an autobiographical essay of 2011, Ilham Tohti said: “I have always maintained that one should not fear differences of opinion and opposition, but rather, (fear only) not having opportunities for exchange.” Unfortunately, the Chinese government is increasingly closing down opportunities to exchange and manifests a

growing fear of differences of opinion. This comes clearly to the fore in the government's clampdown on freedom of expression in general, and on academic freedom in particular. Scholars, writers and academics continue to be a main target of persecution in Xinjiang, but academic freedom is also increasingly constrained in the rest of China. A recent example of the curtailing of academic freedom was the April 2020 imposition of stringent restrictions on scientific papers tracing the origins of Covid-19.

Please help to release Ilham Tohti immediately and unconditionally. He has done nothing more than exercise his right to freedom of expression.

Ilham Tohti's daughter lives in Washington DC and has written a book about her father. She was a speaker at the 2020 AIUSA annual general meeting. I will read her book about her father and try to share at future Group 48 meetings the essence of this story.

*Dale Oller, MD  
Group 48*

## **Take Action for Human Rights Tell Biden: Protect All Those Seeking Safety**

The President's announcement to welcome 100,000 Ukrainian refugees and send \$1 billion in humanitarian assistance to aid civilians is a major victory. While we welcome this news, we must also hold Biden accountable to showing the same level of care to refugees and asylum-seekers who are not white.

Time and time again, this administration has failed to act to protect people from majority Black and brown countries — including Cameroon, Ethiopia, and Haiti. The U.S. revised its border policies to allow Ukrainians to seek safety but continues to deny others: just last month, over 165,000 people seeking safety were denied protection at the border, the majority of whom are Black and brown. This sharp difference in treatment lays bare the discrimination and double standards of U.S. leadership.

All people fleeing conflict should be treated with aid and compassion, no matter who they are or where they come from.

Tell President Biden: Everyone fleeing conflict and violence should be afforded the same opportunity for refuge in the U.S.

<https://act.amnestyusa.org/page/102802/action/1?ea.tracking.id=akeaik88>



## **Take Action for Human Rights Demand Congress Commit \$5 Billion to End Gun Violence**

We all have the right to be safe from gun violence. But our leaders are failing in their duty to protect us – last year was the deadliest gun violence year in the U.S. in decades.

Too many kids and teens are losing their lives, and communities of color are disproportionately affected. This year is on track to be worse... unless we change the way we fight gun violence.

We've just launched a MAJOR campaign to call for Congress to pass the Break the Cycle of Violence Act (H.R. 4118, S. 2275), which would provide \$5 billion in funding for community violence prevention and intervention programs across the country. In city after city, these programs save lives and lower the number of gun homicides by nearly 50%.

These programs work because they are often staffed by community leaders who provide survivors and families with counseling, connections to critical services, conflict avoidance tactics, mediation and more. But with the pandemic and budget shortfalls, too many of them are losing funds.

Take Action: Urge your members of Congress to support the Break the Cycle of Violence Act. It's time to give community heroes the tools they need to help us all live free from gun violence!

[https://act.amnestyusa.org/page/83014/action/1?ea.tracking.id=W21XXWAEGVO&supporter.appealCode=W21XXWAEGVO&en\\_og\\_source=W21XXWAEGVO](https://act.amnestyusa.org/page/83014/action/1?ea.tracking.id=W21XXWAEGVO&supporter.appealCode=W21XXWAEGVO&en_og_source=W21XXWAEGVO)

## **Authorities Close Down Amnesty International's Moscow Office**

April 8, 2022 Today, the Russian authorities have closed down representative offices of Amnesty International and other international NGOs. Reacting to the news, Agnès Callamard, Secretary General of Amnesty International, said:

“Amnesty’s closing down in Russia is only the latest in a long list of organizations that have been punished for defending human rights and speaking the truth to the Russian authorities. In a country where scores of activists and dissidents have been imprisoned, killed or exiled, where independent media has been smeared, blocked or forced to self-censor, and where civil society organizations have been outlawed or liquidated, you must be doing something right if the Kremlin tries to shut you up.

“The authorities are deeply mistaken if they believe that by closing down our office in Moscow they will stop our work documenting and exposing human rights violations. We continue undeterred to work to ensure that people in Russia are able to enjoy their human rights without discrimination. We will redouble our efforts to expose Russia’s egregious human rights violations both at home and abroad.

“We will never stop fighting for the release of prisoners of conscience unjustly detained for standing up for human rights. We will continue to defend independent journalism’s ability to report actual facts, free of the Russian government’s intervention. We will continue to work relentlessly to ensure that all those who are responsible for committing grave human rights violations, whether in Russia, Ukraine or Syria, face justice. Put simply, we will never give up.”

On April 8, the Russian Ministry of Justice delisted Amnesty International’s Moscow Office from the register of the representative offices of the international organizations and foreign NGOs, effectively closing it down alongside with offices of Human Rights Watch, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, Friedrich Ebert Foundation and other organizations. This decision has been taken “in connection with the discovered violations of the Russian legislation.”

On March 11, Russia’s media regulator also blocked access to Amnesty International’s Russian-language website.



## **Apparent War Crimes by Russian Forces in Bucha, Ukraine Must be Investigated**

April 4, 2022 Following reports of apparent war crimes committed by Russian military forces against civilians in Bucha, Agnès Callamard, Secretary General of Amnesty International, said:

“These reports from Bucha are showing a wider pattern of war crimes including extrajudicial executions and torture in other occupied areas of Ukraine.

“We fear the violence suffered by civilians in Bucha at the hands of Russian soldiers is not unique. These incidents should be investigated as war crimes.

“To date, Amnesty International has gathered evidence of civilians in Ukraine killed by indiscriminate attacks in Kharkiv and Sumy Oblast, documented an airstrike that killed civilians queueing for food in Chernihiv, and gathered evidence from civilians living under siege in Kharkiv, Iziium and Mariupol.”

Later this week, Amnesty International will publish new testimony gathered during an on-the-ground investigation in a number of towns in the wider Kyiv region.

As Russia continues its war against Ukraine, Amnesty International is continuing to document violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. All of Amnesty International’s outputs published to date – including news updates, briefings and investigations – can be found here.

Russia’s aggression against Ukraine is itself a crime under humanitarian law.

## AIUSA Group 48

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## Urgent Action: China

### UYGHUR TEENAGE GIRL AND MOTHER DETAINED

NAME AND PRONOUN: Buheliqiemu Abula (she/her), Nuermaiti Ruze (also known as Nur Muhammed Rozi) (he/him) and Aimidoula Waili (also known as Hamdullah Veli) (he/him).

Uyghur woman Buheliqiemu Abula and her 13-year-old daughter were detained near Mecca, Saudi Arabia, on 31 March and told by police they faced deportation to China along with two Uyghur men already held. Buheliqiemu Abula is the former wife of Nuermaiti Ruze, who with Aimidoula Waili has been detained without charge in Saudi Arabia since November 2020. All four of them are now at risk of deportation to China, where they will highly likely be subjected to arbitrary detention, torture and persecution. Pursuant to the international law, the Saudi authorities must immediately stop their deportation.

#### Sample Letter

*Your Excellency,*

*I am writing to express my grave concern for Uyghur woman Buheliqiemu Abula and her 13-year-old daughter who were detained near the Holy City of Mecca, Saudi Arabia, on 31 March. The police told them they were going to be deported to China, according to a message received by friends of Buheliqiemu Abula. Buheliqiemu Abula is the former wife of Nuermaiti Ruze, who with Aimidoula Waili, has been detained without charge in Saudi Arabia since November 2020. The Kingdom must abandon all plans to deport these four Uyghur people as this would amount to a clear violation of Saudi Arabia's non-refoulement obligations.*

*The Chinese government has gone to great lengths to cover up the human rights violations taking place in Xinjiang, and to prevent members of the Uyghur diaspora from speaking up about them. To that end, the Chinese government has been requesting extradition of many Uyghur people living abroad branding them "terrorist" or "extremist" simply for their peaceful activism. Chinese law defines "terrorism" and "extremism" in an overly broad and vague manner, and these laws have been used to crack down on Uyghurs and other Muslim ethnic minorities.*

*There is now ample evidence, including leaked government documents, hundreds of testimonies, as well as drone videos and satellite imagery that the Chinese government has committed at least the crimes against humanity of imprisonment, torture and persecution against Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities in Xinjiang based on their religion and ethnicity.*

*It is extremely alarming to have learned that if forcibly returned to China, Buheliqiemu Abula, her daughter, Nuermaiti Ruze, and Aimidoula Waili will be in real danger of arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment. Their deportation would violate the Kingdom's obligations under international law.*

*I therefore urge you to immediately halt the deportation of Buheliqiemu Abula, her daughter, Nuermaimaiti Ruze, and Aimidoula Waili to China, and immediately release them unless there is sufficient, credible and admissible evidence that they have committed an internationally recognizable offense.*

*Yours sincerely,*

### **Additional information**

54-year-old Uyghur woman Buheliqiemu Abula, who has long-term residence permits in Saudi Arabia and Turkey, had been able to maintain regular contact with her ex-husband Nuermaimaiti Ruze until two weeks ago. The last time she received a phone call from Nuermaimaiti Ruze was on 20 March, when Nuermaimaiti Ruze recounted that he had told the Saudi authorities he and Aimidoula Waili “would rather die here than be sent back to China”. Nuermaimaiti Ruze, a 46-year-old father of five, travelled to Saudi Arabia from China for the first time in June 2013 to perform Umrah and eventually settled down in Mecca, working in a restaurant with a sponsored residence permit. Aimidoula Waili is a Chinese religious scholar of the Uyghur Muslim minority that has been brutally persecuted by the Chinese government since 2017 in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Xinjiang) in northwestern China. Aimidoula Waili, a 54-year-old father of four, was previously arrested in Xinjiang in August 2013 because one of the employees at his factory had allegedly incited an uprising. He told Amnesty International that he had been tortured in prison: being electrocuted and forced to stand on ice while wearing nothing but slippers and underwear for up to three hours every day. After completing his sentence, he was released in 2016 and went to Turkey where he was granted residency documents that allowed him to remain in the country indefinitely. In February 2020, he travelled to Saudi Arabia from Turkey on a tourist visa to perform Umrah, a religious pilgrimage, with his friend Nuermaimaiti Ruze.

Xinjiang is one of the most ethnically diverse regions in China. More than half of the region’s population of 22 million people belong to mostly Turkic and predominantly Muslim ethnic groups, including Uyghurs (around 11.3 million), Kazakhs (around 1.6 million) and other populations whose languages, cultures and ways of life vary distinctly from those of the



Nuermaimaiti Ruze and Aimidoula Waili

Han who are the majority in “interior” China.

Since 2017, under the guise of a campaign against “terrorism” and “religious extremism”, the government of China has carried out massive and systematic abuses against Muslims living in Xinjiang. It is estimated that over a million people have been arbitrarily detained in internment camps throughout Xinjiang since 2017.

In June 2021, Amnesty International published a report revealing how hundreds of thousands of Muslim men and women in China’s Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region are being subjected to arbitrary mass detention, torture, political indoctrination and forced cultural assimilation. Testimonies from former internment camp detainees detailed the extreme measures taken by Chinese authorities since 2017 to essentially root out Islamic religious beliefs and traditions, as well as the cultural practices and local languages of the region’s Muslim ethnic groups. Earlier the same year, another piece of Amnesty research described how the children of internment camp detainees are often sent to state-run “orphan camps” where they face indoctrination and are cut off from their parents.

Amnesty International has documented numerous cases where Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other Turkic Muslim people in Xinjiang had been detained simply for living, travelling, or studying abroad or for communicating with people abroad. Many were detained simply for being “connected” with people who lived, travelled, studied, or communicated with people abroad.

Amnesty International has launched an international campaign calling for the closure of the intern-

ment camps, with more than 70 detailed casefiles on some of those thought to be currently detained. As of September 2021, more than 300,000 signatures had been collected from all over the world to demand the release all those currently detained in internment camps and prisons in Xinjiang.

The evidence Amnesty International has gathered provides a factual basis for the conclusion that the Chinese government has committed at least the crimes against humanity of imprisonment, torture and persecution against Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities.

## **Russian Authorities Launch Witch-Hunt to Catch Anyone Sharing Anti-War News**

March 30, 2022 The Russian authorities have launched a witch-hunt by effectively weaponizing the country's criminal justice system to prosecute anti-war protesters and influential critics of the state who have expressed their opposition to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Amnesty International said today, one month on from the start of the crackdown.

"The persecution of those opposed to Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine goes far beyond previous efforts to stifle protesters and activists. Those caught criticizing the war face an absurd number of arbitrary charges merely for speaking out. They are not only charged with 'discrediting' the armed forces, but also with slander, fraud or accusations of 'terrorism,'" said Marie Struthers, Amnesty International's Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Just a month on from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, at least 60 criminal cases have been initiated over peaceful protests against the war or public criticism of the Russian authorities, according to Agora, a Russian human rights group. They are being investigated under 14 separate articles of the Criminal Code.

At least 46 people have faced criminal charges, including nine who were taken into custody and three who were confined under house arrest. They have been charged with a myriad of "crimes", including insulting government officials, libel, inciting extremist activities, inciting mass riots, hatred and fraud, and the desecration of burial sites, according to Agora.

At least 10 of these cases saw critics being investigated under a new law, for "discrediting" Russia's armed forces. Under the new Russian law this is punishable by up to 10 years in prison — or 15 years if the comments caused "grave consequences".

### **TAKE ACTION:**

Write an Appeal in your own words or use the model letter.

#### **His Majesty King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud**

Office of His Majesty the King Royal Court,

Riyadh Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Fax: +966 11 403 3125,

Twitter: @KingSalman

Copies to: Minister of Justice

Twitter: @MojKsa

Please take action as soon as possible until June 1st, 2022. Please check with the Amnesty office if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

On March 4, this legislation was passed unanimously by both chambers of the Russian Parliament and signed into law by President Vladimir Putin on the same day. On March 22, the law was expanded to criminalize the sharing of "fake news" about any activities of Russia's government officials abroad.

On March 16, Veronika Belotserkovskaya, a gastronomy blogger with 850,000 Instagram followers, became the first individual charged under the new law. She was charged with sharing "knowingly false information about the use of the Russian Armed Forces to destroy cities and the civilian population of Ukraine, including children."

Sergey Klokov, a technician at the Moscow City Police Department, was the first person taken into custody under this law after being arrested on March 18. According to his lawyer, he was charged with spreading "fake news" during phone calls with residents of Crimea and Moscow region.

More cases followed. On March 22, Aleksandr Nevzorov, a prominent journalist who gained popularity during perestroika (a state-approved series of political reforms in the 1980s), was charged with sharing "false information" about Russia's strikes against a maternity hospital in Mariupol, after criticizing the shelling in an Instagram post on March 9.

On March 25, Izabella Yevloyeva, a journalist from Russia's Republic of Ingushetia, was charged after sharing a post on social media that described the Russian armed forces' pro-war "Z" symbol as being "synonymous with aggression, death, pain and shameless manipulation."