

**Document 20.8: “Profile: Rebiya Kadeer,” BBC News report on an Uyghur activist, March 17, 2005**

Rebiya Kadeer was a successful businesswoman and philanthropist in China’s restive Xinjiang until her arrest in 1999 for allegedly endangering national security. Her crime, the authorities said, was to send local newspaper reports about the activities of Xinjiang’s ethnic Turkish-speaking [*sic*]<sup>1</sup> Uighurs to her US-based husband, even though these were freely available.

It was a sharp reversal in fortunes for someone whose local achievements the Communist government had until then trumpeted. Mrs. Kadeer... grew up in poverty but at the time of her release was known locally as “the millionairess.”...

[She] used her wealth to provide fellow Uighurs with employment and training. Partly as a result, she was appointed to China’s national advisory group, the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), and sent as one of the country’s delegates to the United Nations World Conference on Women in 1995.

But her treatment by the authorities changed, rights organizations say, when her Uighur husband and former political prisoner Sidik Rouzi fled China for the US in 1996. He had previously been imprisoned for campaigning against China’s treatment of the ethnic minority, which make up more than half the mainly Muslim population of Xinjiang. Mrs. Kadeer’s passport was seized, she was harassed by police and, in 1998, barred from reappointment to the CPPCC.

She was detained in August 1999, on her way to meet a visiting delegation from the United States Congressional Research Service to complain about political prisoners in Xinjiang. She was convicted of endangering state security by the Urumqi Intermediate People’s Court on 10 March, 2000. Her eight-year sentence was set to expire on 12 August, 2007, but was cut by 12 months last year for good behaviour.

Source: BBC News Online. “Profile: Rebiya Kadeer,” 17 Mar. 2005.

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<sup>1</sup> Uighurs (also spelled Uyghurs) in Xinjiang speak the Uighur language, which is part of the Turkic language family. Although it is related to Turkish, they are not the same language.