

Biography

Tursunay Ziyawudun

Ms. Tursunay Ziyawudun is a survivor of the Chinese government's extra-legal arbitrary detention centers in the Uyghur Region, and an outspoken advocate for Uyghur human rights. Ms. Tursunay was born in Künes County, a county under the administration of the Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. She and her husband, who is of Kazakh ethnicity, moved to Kazakhstan in 2010. Ms. Tursunay returned to her hometown in November 2016 to renew her passport and was immediately swept up into the Chinese government's "strike first" policies of harsh control and collective punishment of Uyghurs. She survived more than a year in total, in two different concentration camps, suffering food deprivation; forcible injections of unknown medicines; harsh interrogation and beatings; forced political indoctrination, forced loyalty oaths, and renunciation of faith; and rape.

She was released from the camps in December 2018, several months later she was able to return to Kazakhstan. In August 2020, fearing for her safety and facing the risk of refoulement to China, she fled to a third country and was granted special parole to enter the United States in September 2020. After receiving emergency medical care, she is receiving assistance for her resettlement in the U.S. from the Uyghur Human Rights Project, the Uyghur American Association, and many volunteers from the Uyghur American community. As one of very few survivors of the concentration camps who has reached safety in another country, she has provided testimony to human rights groups, researchers, and journalists investigating the Chinese government's atrocity crimes against Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslim peoples.