

China sentences six more to death over ethnic rioting

Written by Taipei Times

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China yesterday sentenced to death six more people convicted of murder, arson and other violent crimes during ethnic rioting that left at least 197 dead in the far-western city of Urumqi, bringing the total number of death sentences linked to the July unrest to 12.

The six sentenced to death yesterday were among 14 tried on Wednesday by the Urumqi Intermediate People's Court, five of them apparently from the Uighur ethnic minority and one from the Han Chinese majority.

Three of the death sentences were suspended for two years, after which such sentences are normally commuted to life in prison, subject to good behavior.

Three more defendants were sentenced to life in prison while the other five were also given long prison terms, Xinhua news agency reported from Urumqi.

Exiled Uighur leader Rebiya Kadeer condemned the earlier death sentences, passed on Monday against six Uighurs, as politically motivated and said they were likely to "further enrage" Uighurs, who have long complained of discrimination.

Han Chinese defendant Han Junbo (韩俊波) was among those sentenced to death yesterday, while the court sentenced his accomplice Liu Bo (刘波) to 10 years in prison, the agency said.

Han and Liu were accused of killing one Uighur and seriously injuring another during a revenge attack by Han Chinese residents of Urumqi on July 7, earlier reports said.

The 21 people tried this week are among 430 people charged with crimes linked to the rioting in early July.

Prosecutors had already sent cases against 108 suspects for trial by local courts, the agency earlier quoted a spokesman of the city's chief procurator's office as saying.

The rioting in Urumqi left 197 people dead and about 1,600 injured, according to the government.

Uighur exile groups, however, say that up to 800 people died in Urumqi, many of them Uighurs shot or beaten to death by police.

In a statement on Tuesday, Kadeer accused the government of using this week's death sentences to "send a political message representing brute force, fear and intimidation."

"The Chinese government has done nothing to substantively address the root causes of the July unrest, and has responded to the unrest by carrying out killings and mass detentions of Uighurs and bringing in tens of thousands of troops to the region," she said, -referring to the Xinjiang region, of which Urumqi is the capital.

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The rioting on July 5 apparently began after a protest over the deaths of two Uighurs in the southern city of Shaoguan.

Kadeer arrived in New Zealand on Monday after being invited by the Green Party.

At a public meeting at the University of Auckland on Tuesday, Kadeer was greeted by a small number of vocal pro-Beijing protesters brandishing a banner reading "AU does not welcome terrorist."

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