

## Xinjiang launches fresh 'Strike Hard' campaign

Written by Taipei Times

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Police in China's restive Xinjiang region have launched a fresh manhunt aimed at capturing fugitives wanted in connection with deadly ethnic violence in July this year, state media said yesterday.

The regional public security bureau's "Strike Hard and Rectify" campaign, which began on Sunday, will run until the end of the year, the Xinjiang Daily reported.

"We must expand the scope of our work on capturing fugitives, do better to gather, analyze and research all intelligence and focus on cases and clues related to violent acts of terrorism," the report said, citing Xinjiang police.

"We must strictly prevent violent acts of terrorism and ensure stability," it said.

Violence between Uighurs and members of China's dominant Han ethnic group erupted on July 5 in the regional capital Urumqi, leaving nearly 200 people dead, according to the official toll.

Last month, 21 people were convicted for their roles in the unrest, with 12 sentenced to death. Nine of the sentences were upheld in appeal hearings last week, while the other three reportedly elected not to appeal.

The US-based Uighur American Association, a court in Yili prefecture some 500km west of Urumqi, last week jailed 19 people for state security crimes, some linked to the July unrest.

Authorities have blamed the Xinjiang unrest on "ethnic separatists," without providing any evidence.

But Uighurs say the violence was triggered when police cracked down on peaceful protests over a brawl in late June at a factory in southern China that state media said left two Uighurs dead.

Human Rights Watch said last month that they had documented at least 43 Uighurs, including children, who remain unaccounted for after earlier round-ups by security forces following the clashes.

The real number could be much higher, the group said.

China's roughly 8 million Uighurs, who speak a Turkic language, have long complained of religious, political and cultural oppression by Chinese authorities, and tensions have simmered in Xinjiang for years.

China says it faces a serious terrorist threat from Muslim separatists in the region, but rights groups have accused Beijing of exaggerating the threat to justify its tight controls.

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The new security crackdown comes one month after the 60th anniversary of the founding of communist China on Oct. 1, during which security forces maintained calm in Xinjiang, the newspaper said.

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