

China executes nine convicted over Xinjiang unrest

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China said yesterday it had put to death nine people over deadly ethnic unrest in Xinjiang, the first executions since the violence erupted in July.

Authorities convicted 21 defendants last month — nine were sentenced to death, three were given the death penalty with a two-year reprieve, a sentence usually commuted to life in jail, and the rest were handed various prison terms.

“The first group of nine people who were sentenced to death recently have already been executed in succession, with the approval of the Supreme Court,” said Hou Hanmin, spokeswoman for the Xinjiang government.

It was not clear, however, when the executions took place.

Previous statements by the Xinjiang government said eight of the nine were Uighurs and one was Han Chinese.

The violence erupted on July 5, pitting Uighurs against Han Chinese. An official toll put the number of dead at 197, with more than 1,600 injured. Han vigilantes then went on a rampage against Uighurs two days later, but the exact number of casualties from that day has never been divulged.

The 21 defendants were convicted of crimes such as murder, intentional damage to property, arson, and robbery.

Han Junbo, the Han Chinese man who was sentenced to death, was convicted of killing a Uighur man, a previous Xinjiang government statement said.

One of the Uighurs given the death penalty was found guilty of beating two people to death with another defendant, as well as stealing people's possessions.

Dilxat Raxit, a spokesman for the World Uyghur Congress, condemned the executions, saying the Uighurs who were put to death had not been able to meet with their families.

“We regret that the United States and Europe have not adopted effective measures towards China regarding the death penalty issue,” he said by telephone from Sweden.

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